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# SOME POSTULATES OF A CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY

BY

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god  
Faith  
Religion - Philosophy

TO  
MY WIFE

"To believe in God, *a* God to look up to—*something*—to believe in a divine purpose and a hereafter—this is not science or religion or metaphysics or philosophy; it is instinct—truth."—Lady Knoyle in Wilfrid Ewart's *Way of Revelation*, p. 206.

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## PREFACE

IN this volume full use has been made of previously published material, including (i) an essay on "The Christian Contribution to the Conception of Eternal Life," which appeared originally in a volume of King's College Lectures on Immortality (1920), and is here reprinted by kind permission of the University of London Press; (2) "Some Postulates of a Christian Philosophy," a series of three lectures delivered at Sion College in November 1920, and subsequently published in four articles in *Theology*, April, May, July, and August, 1921, and here reproduced by kind permission of the Editor; (3) an article on "Immortality and Resurrection," which appeared in the *Church Quarterly Review* for April 1922; (4) an article on "Divine Revelation," which appeared in the same Review for October 1923; (5) an article on "Christ and Metaphysics," published in the *Interpreter* for July 1922. We are indebted to the Editors of these two theological journals for kind permission to reprint these articles.

It is the writer's hope that these chapters may prove to be a small contribution to what he feels is an essential need of our time—viz. a Christian Philosophy.

Whilst we are convinced that Christianity is not primarily or essentially a religious philosophy, but a Way of Life, and whilst, therefore, our conclusion is that ultimately our Christian Faith cannot be fully rationalized, we hope, nonetheless, that what is here written may at least define what the real issues at stake are in the attempt to clear up the relations between philosophy and religion. We venture to hope that this book may prove of value especially to theological students and candidates for Holy Orders. The challenge to Faith presented by much modern philosophical speculation must sooner or later be faced by all thoughtful theological students. Those of us who approach the study of the philosophy of religion from the standpoint of convinced

believers must experience an intellectual shock in the inevitable awakening from our dogmatic slumbers. The result in some cases is a loss of faith. Others too readily acquiesce in such a rationalization of their belief as to destroy its essential content and evacuate it of its intrinsic value.

What is here written we hope may prove to be a guide in showing what may safely be accepted and what must be rejected in our effort to come to terms with modern philosophical speculation.

It remains to express my grateful thanks to the Bishop of Willesden, to whom I owe more than I can ever adequately express for a friendship of many years, encouragement and help freely given in the quest after Truth, and criticism and helpful suggestions upon much which is here written ; also to the Editorial Secretary of the S.P.C.K, Dr. Lowther Clarke, who has kindly corrected the proofs and aided me by valuable suggestions ; to my daughter Marion for assistance in compiling the Index ; and to my wife to whom I have dedicated this volume in humble thankfulness for that without which no words of mine would be anything but sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

H. M. R.

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# SOME POSTULATES OF A CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

WE need to-day a Christian Philosophy adequate to do justice to the content of the Christian Revelation. This content comprises both an historical and an experiential element. We have in the Christian religion both an historical revelation and a personal experience. It is useless to take any philosophical system built up on alien principles and to try to fit into it the Christian data. The result always is a desperate effort so to modify the latter as to make them conform to the system as given. The history of the efforts to reconcile the Christian religion with current philosophical speculations is in itself painful reading and also a salutary warning to us to-day. We do not, therefore, propose to attempt the task afresh. There is another way to approach the problem. We can begin with our Christian Faith as rooted in history and known in experience. We can go on to deduce from these data the necessary philosophical postulates. We may then find ourselves in a position to attempt an outline of a Christian Philosophy which arises definitely from these premises and is based upon these principles. Such a philosophy, so constructed, must stand or fall on its own intrinsic merits in comparison with other systems derived from other principles. Our method is in this sense the empirical approach to the study of the problem of the nature of ultimate Reality. We begin with our Christian data, which consist in both fact and interpretation of fact. We go on to ask what are the philosophical presuppositions essential of acceptance if we are to continue to hold fast to the content of our Christian

belief. To what do they commit us? Given, for example, the fact of the Incarnation, what are its philosophical presuppositions? Given, again, the Christian doctrine of God, which arises as a consequence of the revelation in the Incarnation and the whole previous development culminating in Hebrew ethical monotheism, of which the Incarnation itself was the crown and the historical vindication, what philosophical premises are essential to cover such data? Incidentally, of course, the deduction of these philosophical principles will reveal the inconsistency of Christianity with other rival conceptions of Deity. Ultimately, in short, we shall be forced to choose between a world-view derived exclusively from human speculation and one which accepts as given a Divine revelation and is content to be guided by that, and the light it sheds upon our search after Truth.

Whether by such aid we are able to construct a fuller, richer, and more illuminating conception of Deity and to frame a more satisfying and intelligible answer to the Cosmic problem than is the case if we confine ourselves to what is called by contrast Natural Religion, is precisely the point upon which we must ultimately decide, after an examination of the results in both cases. And our decision will be a choice between rival philosophies. But at least we shall have secured that Christianity has received a fair hearing and has been presented in terms of itself and not disguised and possibly disfigured by being clothed in a language and expressed in a thought-form alien to its essential character. In a Christian Philosophy we at least secure that adequate justice is done both to our historic facts and our Christian experience, so far, at any rate, as these are capable of being expressed in terms of intellectual concepts. We must always bear in mind the inadequacy of any intellectual expression of experience, whether religious or otherwise. But with this proviso, we at least secure that our system of philosophy is built up from our own premises and our data are not mutilated in the attempt to give them intellectual expression in an alien system of thought. It is true that a study of the history of Christian doctrine shows us that Christianity in every age has had to borrow the

thought-forms of the time in the effort to make its message intelligible and to express its truths in the language of the day. Thus Platonism, Aristotelianism, and all subsequent modifications or enlargements of these philosophies down through Hegelianism to our own time have served this purpose. Incidentally, in doing so, they have succeeded in leaving their mark upon Christian doctrine. Be it remembered also that they have not infrequently succeeded in so seriously modifying or even distorting the Christian conception of God as to necessitate the subsequent task on the part of Christian thinkers to labour to disengage the true essence of the Christian belief from the entanglements in which it has become caught, and in consequence of which it has suffered loss in its power of appeal to the minds and hearts of men. The essence of the conception, however, is always capable of being recovered by reference both to the inspired record in which it is preserved, the Bible, and the distinctive Christian experience of God in Christ Jesus, as this is revealed in the history of the Christian religion through the ages and in the religious experience of Christians to-day, whether as individuals or in the corporate consciousness of the Living Church.

The Christian conception of God, then, exists to-day, and it is our task to attempt its expression in the thought-forms of our time. In the light of the warning of history, we enter upon this task with some trepidation. In the effort to make our Christianity conform to the world of ideas in which we live, there is a real danger of our leaving on one side such features as fail to commend themselves to the modern mind. Hence we try to make it conform to our ideas of what we think it ought to be, rather than allow it to conform our ideas to its content. Here lies the danger of such a mutilation of its essential content as has disfigured the pages of the past history of Christian doctrine, not least as regards the Christian conception of God.

We are, however, in a better position, perhaps, to attempt the task afresh in these days, because there is no outstanding philosophical system which has anything like the prestige or pre-eminence over other systems as to have won for itself

in our own time any widespread acceptance. Hence there is no pressing temptation for the theologians of our day to adapt our Christian faith to any prevalent fashionable mode of thought. The present position of the philosophical world may be compared without any disrespect to a Babel. No period in the history of philosophy appears to have presented such a hopeless confusion and chaos in the clash of rival speculations as we find to-day. To present, therefore, Christianity in terms of "modern" philosophy is doomed to failure if only because of the difficulty of finding any "modern philosophy" widely accepted as rightly so labelled. We are thus free for the moment from the tyranny of any one dominant system of thought, or, for that matter, of any one dominant concept, to the terms of which we must all conform. Nor is Science in any better position to dictate to theology what it must or must not accept in the Christian revelation as true, seeing that the so-called "facts" of to-day in the world of Science are the fictions of to-morrow and we know not what a day may bring forth in the way of new discovery to render uncertain once again our "established hypotheses" and to throw into the melting-pot our theoretical constructions based upon them.

In the midst of such a chaos our task, if not our privilege, is so to present our Christian verity as to win for it an acceptance and a hearing, amidst the confusion of tongues and the ferment of new ideas and the eager rush to listen to anything new, provided only that it is in no way related to the wisdom of the past and bears no trace of any dependence upon revealed truth. It is indeed possible that the very confusion of modern philosophical speculation, in the face of modern advances in scientific knowledge and the consequent widespread agnosticism which despairs of our attaining ultimate truth, may lead men to seek to save themselves from hopeless pessimism by a wistful upward glance in hope that perchance some Divine revelation may have been granted to lighten our present darkness. This is the opportunity of the Church to speak out with no uncertain voice and to proclaim afresh the old message of Good



News to the effect that God has really spoken unto us and still is speaking in His Son. If, in very weariness of the uncertainties of all human knowledge, men are induced to turn afresh to us; if haply by any chance God may have spoken through His Church to the world; if men come again to enquire what light precisely we can shed upon things from the storehouse of revealed truth deposited with us: here is the opportunity of the Church to bring out of its treasures things new and old. Here is our chance to show that a philosophy of life can be presented which, because based upon historic fact and personal experience, rings true to life, meets modern needs, and can stand the test, not only of intellectual coherence and rational apprehension, but also that of being able to satisfy the deeper questionings of the soul of man and bring life as well as light to those in need. Such a philosophy will have as its dominant concept the Christian revelation of God as given to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Christian world-view must ultimately stand or fall with our belief in the Incarnation. It is the light shed by this stupendous fact that gives cogency to all the distinctive features in our conception of God and His relationship to the world, the nations, and the individual lives of men. If we reject the Christian interpretation of the fact of Christ, we cut adrift from the open secret of the Universe. We lose ourselves in the mists of human speculation and conjecture. On the basis of the Christian hypothesis, however, the case is different. On it we can build up a consistent system of thought and then offer it to the verdict of the distinctive Christian experience of God in Christ Jesus. Does it "work"? is a crucial question, though the ultimate criterion of judgment is not a pragmatic test. The Christian starts with what he believes to be historic facts and their interpretation. Assume, he says in effect, that the Church's interpretation of the facts is the correct one. Certain conclusions as regards the nature of God; certain truths touching His relationship to the world and created human spirits; certain views as to His eternal purpose for mankind; certain beliefs as regards the world to come and final destiny; certain views as to

His method of work in the world and many other truths too numerous to be given in detail, but all to be found in the histories of Christian doctrine and the summaries of Christian belief—all this follows. All is the elucidation of the content of the Christian revelation. All can be demonstrated as essentially parts of a consistent system and all results in a distinctive Christian outlook upon life—a way of life to be lived and a philosophy of life which can be presented for the world's criticism and rejection or acceptance. It parts company in crucial points from much other speculation on the same or kindred subjects. Our claim for it is that it is revealed truth. It is not irrational, though it demands from men that they judge of it by its own criterion of judgment and not by other criteria. It is explicable in terms of itself. Its supernatural origin and credentials are such that being spiritual they must be discerned spiritually. Its hall-mark of authentication, therefore, is to be sought in a lived experience rather than in reflection upon it from outside. We cannot eliminate from it the miraculous element, no matter what pressure may be brought to bear upon us in the interests of rationalism or any other system of thinking which derives from experience other than the Christian. We could seek to commend it to our generation by eliminating from it all that offends the modern mind and fashioning it into something other than itself. There is mystery in it. This we cannot help. Indeed, seeing that it deals with the Being and Character of God, its baffling features are in many ways its best commendation to us. Were Christianity not mysterious, it would not be historic Christianity, but some substitute.

Here, then, is our faith. Here is our philosophy. Seek to judge it, and in the end it will judge you. Seek to conform it to your standards of truth and your ideas as to the nature of ultimate reality, and you will find in the end that it refuses so to be transformed. On the contrary, yield yourself to its influence, and you will find that, far from your succeeding in transforming it, it will transform you. It is no static system of beliefs spun out of the imagination of men. It is rather dynamic. It is revolu-

tionary. It forces a world-view upon you which changes your whole outlook upon life. It is a creed which is a veritable battle-cry. It urges to action. It kindles a flame which will not be quenched. Its work in the world, from the day of its inception through the ages down to the present, testifies to its dynamic character. Its persistence in the face of opposition testifies to its seemingly inexhaustible vitality. Its history and its present appeal cannot be ignored. Why not seek, then, to discover its secret for yourself?

Now, in the first place, we do not ask men to sit down and speculate as to what exactly the content of Deity ought to be or to define precisely what is the nature of ultimate reality. We do not speculate first and then search around in history to find out if the universe exhibits any signs of the presence of a Deity such as we by speculation have imagined must exist. We begin, on the contrary, with an invitation to search the Scriptures and to study the history of God's Chosen People. What is the result? Apart from any question as to whence these people derived their ideas of God, it is a plain fact of history that they reached a lofty conception without parallel in any other religion. Jewish ethical monotheism, whatever its origin, is there plainly taught. Again, purely as a matter of history, it is known to have played a decisive part in moulding and fashioning the fortunes of a people whose history is indisputably a unique one, so much so that they have come to be recognized amongst the nations of the earth as having had a genius for religion. It was a sound instinct which summed up the evidences for Christianity in one phrase: "The Jew." Sound also is that instinct which finds Christianity rooted in history and refuses to divorce the New Testament from the Old. The Christian conception of God has its origin in a progressive Divine revelation, the history of which can be traced in the Old Testament Scriptures, with its culmination in the New Testament record of the life and work of Jesus Christ. But the story does not end there. The subsequent history of Christianity is the record of a long, painful, and, with many setbacks, on the whole successful effort to appreciate in growing

measure the fuller significance of that revelation of God in Christ Jesus which we find recorded in the pages of Scripture and elucidated by the Christian Church. The New Testament being a Church document—the product of a believing and worshipping community, witnessing to the continuous presence within it of the Holy Spirit of God—the Church claims for it an inspiration which it does not ask us to accord to any other written document, and in all cases of doubt as to what we are to take as the revealed truth concerning God, it refers us to the Bible as the written vindication of the Church's belief. The principle of instruction and interpretation all through is "the Church to teach and the Bible to prove." The revelation has been committed to the Church of the Living God. It is embodied in written documents; it is witnessed to in the history of the Church's efforts to interpret its meaning; it is exhibited in the story of the Church's subsequent history.

The essential features of the content of the Christian conception of God have been elucidated in countless books on Church doctrine and in many histories of Christian thought. To these we are referred for an elaborate description. Suffice it for the purposes of this introduction if we fix our attention upon one or two outstanding and crucial features of the picture.

The Christian conception of God is not a theoretical construction but the product of an historical religious experience. It is essentially the result of a personal activity. Christians believe that God Himself has been active in the historical process and has succeeded in achieving such a measure of Self-disclosure as man has been able to assimilate. All revelation is conditional upon man's capacity of receptivity. It is thus necessarily conditioned to this extent and involves two things: God willing and eager to reveal Himself, and man capable of a response, however inadequate, to the Divine advance. The God whom Jesus revealed in fuller measure is the God who beforetime had spoken by divers portions and in divers manners unto the fathers in the prophets. He is a Being, moreover, who has not left Himself without a witness



to heathen nations. Traces of Him can be found in the Gentile world as well as in the Jewish. His Self-disclosure, however, to those other than the Chosen People, in its results, had not up to the time of Christ, humanly speaking, attained to anything like the success attendant upon His special revelational activity in the history of the People of God.

Thus it comes about that men's eyes are focused upon the history of His dealings with Israel as recorded in the Bible. It is realized that here may be found the purest stream of Divine revelation and the clearest witness to the character of God, whose continued activity in Self-manifestation through the ages had in the fullness of time culminated in an historic incarnation. To the elucidation of this Christian view of God and the world both Jew and Gentile have made their contribution. It is nonetheless true that whilst in these latter days our study of comparative religions has given us many sidelights upon the Presence and continued activity of the One God in heathen darkness and has shown us how near to an understanding of His character men came who were outside the privileged circle of the Covenant People, still, we are forced to turn to the Jew if we want to enter most fully into the meaning of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. To say that we know nothing of God apart from Jesus Christ is to cut the New Testament and Christian experience from their roots in their historical setting and to seek with Marcion to distinguish two Gods, unrelated and even antagonistic, the God who spoke through Moses and the prophets and the God who revealed Himself in Christ Jesus. No such antagonism exists between the two Testaments. If the Christian conception of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is of a fuller and richer content than that given us by the "I AM" of Jewish ethical monotheism, the difference is measured by our knowledge of the progressive character of the revelation. It is the same God who is present all through and active in Self-disclosure. If we can trace historically a progress from a pure and rigid monotheism to the more subtle and suggestive implications of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, this is not

to say that the Christian broke away from the ancient faith of Israel and served other gods cunningly constructed for him by fourth- and fifth-century Gentile metaphysicians and thus relapsed into a polytheism from which the distinctive Hebrew religion was meant to save him. Far from it. The distinctive Christian experience of God in Christ Jesus, studied in the light both of the Old Testament revelation and the New Testament record, is the source to which we are to look for the richer content of the Christian conception, rooted as this is in Hebrew monotheism, yet transcending it in the fuller revelation it contains of the mystery of the Being of God. The God of Old and New Testament revelation, then, is the same, though the knowledge of Him and deeper appreciation of His essential characteristics is something the progress of which can be traced in the history of both Jewish and Gentile religious experience and more specifically in the distinctive experience of God in Christ Jesus.

Now, if we question this religious experience and ask what it yields, we are faced at the outset by a conception of God which cuts clean across much metaphysical speculation and which really raises issues of the gravest moment. The Christian conception is uniformly and without exception that of a God who is active, dynamic, personal, whilst withal unchangeable, the living God. We have not here to do with any product of abstract reasoning, yielding us a static concept of Deity, nor have we as an object of worship the personification of the powers of nature. Neither Jew nor Christian was taught to worship an abstraction in this sense. Their religious experience was that of communion with the Living God. We cannot escape the implications of this, however pressed we may find ourselves when in the presence of the gods of philosophical speculation and the constructions of man's reasoning. These may and do yield us a conception of Deity as impersonal. The Christian conception parts company decisively from them in its vindication of God as essentially personal, the Living God; One, therefore, to whom, at least analogically (to borrow a term of scholasticism), we must attribute will, feeling, thought, and whatever in short is

essential to a personal life. At the very outset, therefore, we are faced with the charge of anthropomorphism. We are told that we make God after our own image and ascribe to Him attributes of our finite individuality, and characteristics of our human life such as can, in the nature of things, find no place in any intelligible concept of Deity. We are guilty of the folly of colouring ultimate reality with the imperfections of our shadow life. We apply to the absolute the essential relativism of our own mundane existence. Is God a person? we are asked, and if we say the question is unfairly put and we seek to get round it by speaking of God as personal rather than a Person, nonetheless it remains true that in the last resort we must admit that our Christian conception of God is that of a Being who is at least alive and who must be thought of in terms of the highest we know, viz. personality. Is not our concept plainly shot through with the limitations of our finite thought? Clearly a Personal God must have form of some kind, however ethereal, and we are compelled to picture Him as located somewhere, even though we name it Heaven. Again, if He is capable of experience, it must be through duration in time, even though we seek to escape from this by naming Him as dwelling in eternity. If we conceive of Him as active and purposeful, Creator and Sustainer of all that is, plainly He is a God who works through history. Now, there are philosophical conceptions of ultimate reality, we are informed, which are free from any such crude anthropomorphic implications. Had we not better choose these in the interests of clear thinking?

Thus we reach the parting of the ways. The God of the philosopher and the God of revelation have little in common. Which shall we choose, and why? Shall we tone down our Christian conception so as to make it conform more to philosophical ideas, or shall we boldly accept the implications of our Christian revelation and proceed to build up our Christian philosophical system around it? We choose the latter course. And we do so because we refuse to betray the verdict of our religious experience. The Absolute of philosophy is silent when we seek it in our distress and it

makes no response to our needs. Not so the God of the Jews or the God of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. So we make our choice and at once we get our philosophical concept of Personality. How far will it take us? Can we think of ultimate reality in personal terms? We believe that we can. We are convinced that a philosophy could be built up around a dominant concept of personality, human and Divine, and that it would give us a better insight into the meaning of life than anything yet given us by systems of thought which insist that we take something lower than the highest we know as our major premise. It is a choice between an impersonal something, the Absolute, and Someone, whom we name God. We cut adrift from all systems of thought which seek to elevate abstractions to the status of Absolute Values. We refuse, e.g., to regard Beauty, Truth, and Goodness as having any reality apart from a Personal Life of One whose characteristics they essentially are. We do not worship Holiness as such, but we worship the Holy One of Israel.

Again, we know nothing of Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Omnipresence as abstract entities attaching to an equally abstract idea of Deity and to which, therefore, our conception of God must conform. What we are concerned with is a Living Being whose attributes they are and through whose personal life they find their expression and exercise. Thus their content as attributes of God is deduced not *a priori* from what we think they ought to mean, but from the revelation of their meaning as this is seen in the record of God at work in the world and supremely from the disclosure of their exercise in the life and work of Jesus Christ. If, as we believe, He was God incarnate, then these attributes pertaining to his Godhead found expression within the limits of His truly (not merely) human life. This is a fruitful line of thought and leads us to a conception of the Omnipotence of Love. We have to study these attributes, in fact, in the light of our knowledge of the character of the God whose they are. Thus the knowledge Jesus had of what was in man throws an illuminating light upon the Omniscience of the same Love, and Love's Omnipresence is seen in a watchful Providence which marks



the fall of a sparrow, discerns a Nathaniel at prayer when he thought himself unseen by any human eye, and makes itself known to us in the Breaking of the Bread. The devout communicant, in fact, needs no labour of speculation to enable him to understand how Deity can be everywhere at a moment of time. His Presence at a thousand altars, in love's self-donation, for the feeding of souls, and the revelation which this implies of the Divine insight into man's true needs, is the proof in a religious experience of intimate communion with the Living God of His possession of these attributes as known in their exercise by Him in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, when He deals with us as with sons. Thus in the Christian conception of God, our ideas of these attributes as pertaining to Him have to be so changed as to enable us to understand what this meaneth, namely, the fact that God's Almighty Power is declared most chiefly in showing mercy and pity. This is a new idea of Omnipotence the Church itself has scarcely yet grasped, still less an unbelieving world.

Again, Jesus reveals a God who does things. The Christian God is One who is at work in the world. And His work is the outcome of His character. God is Love. Hence He is Creator and Redeemer. This leads us to a view of history as the story of a great work of God in our midst for redemptive ends. We have a principle of historic teleology which is a direct outcome of our Christian philosophy with its leading concept of Divine Personality. If we have a Personal Living God at work, then history is a real process and its meaning is to be defined in terms of the end towards which God is working and the Purpose which governs His activity in the affairs of men.

Here, again, we part company from a whole school of thinkers who insist that we must interpret history quite apart from its incidental reference to ourselves and the vicissitudes of our temporal existence as finite beings in time and space. We must rather, so we are told, seek to rise above this egocentric approach and think more in terms of the cosmic significance of the whole world-process which is working itself out quite independently of our mundane existence.

We are, after all, but tiny creatures in an infinitesimally small part of the whole universe, and our destiny can in no real sense be bound up with the process of the suns. Nature, in fact, is supremely indifferent to our existence and we are very late comers upon the scene. Why should we think that the whole play is staged solely in our interests? To think of God as occupied in the trivial details of our existence here and as actively engaged in ordering events and conducting the affairs of the universe in our interests with our well-being as His chief concern is surely the quintessence of egoism on our part, and childish in the extreme. It is, so we gather, a world-view which is a relic from geocentric, pre-Copernican astronomy. It received its deathblow with the advent of modern scientific knowledge and the disclosure of the vastness of the cosmos and the consequent relative insignificance of this earth and its dwellers. So we are asked to discard one of the central features in the Christian conception of God, viz. the doctrine of Providence. This doctrine, so we gather, is too plainly naïve and parochial in its outlook. It must yield to those larger and grander views of the true significance of the cosmic process which the concept of evolution forces upon us. Moreover, the revolutionary *Weltanschauung* opened out before us by Einstein's Theory of Relativity makes any such belief wholly untenable.

Here, again, we must make our choice between rival philosophies of history. Here, again, our choice is guided by our Christian conception of God. Ultimately we have to choose between the Greek static concept and the Hebrew dynamic concept of the historical process; between the idea of the eternity of the world-process as such and the thought of history as the record of a process in which occur the free acts of personalities in a providentially-ordered world. Here, again, we are guided by our dominant concept of personality. We are not the product of events in the last issue, but in our measure their producers. God Himself as Perfect Personality is not caught up and carried along as a passive instrument in a huge machine over which He has no control. There is no room for a doctrine of Providence in a world conceived of as

governed by inexorable and unchanging impersonal laws under nobody's control. But who in these days is the victim of this nightmare of radical scientific determinism? Such a "block universe," we now know, has no existence in fact. It is simply a product of the imagination; a mental abstraction arising from a mistaken deduction from those generalizations which Science for its own convenience exalted to the status of "Universal Laws." The concept of scientific "law," we have come to see, is bound up with the hypothesis of determinism and is really only a false deduction from the observed uniformities of Nature. We know also that the notion of cause and effect, however useful an hypothesis, will not bear the light of philosophical investigation, more particularly since Einstein's theory is forcing us to reconsider that factor—viz. the part played by the observer—which Science has found it convenient to ignore in all its calculations, but which is essential to any full appreciation of the "external world" as anything more than what it appears to Science to be, if we wish to see beyond appearance to reality.

Natural Science has been engaged in discussing the actual phenomena of the "external world," without pausing to reflect that in the last analysis what is observed are phenomena—i.e. events or sequences which have no meaning apart from a perceiving mind for which they are "phenomena." Thus this view of the "external world" as something existing in its own right is nothing more than a convenient working hypothesis of Science, and when submitted to philosophical investigation has to yield to a fuller and more comprehensive hypothesis which takes into account not only the external "object," but also the personal "subject" for whom it is an "object." Thus we are faced with the problem of the "Subject-Object" relationship, and, without entering upon the questions thus raised, at least we have lighted upon the presence of something in the universe which even when expelled with a pitchfork always has a habit of reappearing at awkward moments, we mean the human person. Science gives us one, and that the least important, aspect of the universe. Once the presence of the psychical is admitted as a decisive factor, scientific

mechanical determinism goes by the board and the part played by personality has to be reassessed. We then rise to a higher view of the world-process which refuses to see ourselves as mere products of an impersonal evolutionary trend of events and mere parts of an elaborate mechanism governed by rigid and inflexible laws. Far from it. We are, if you like, parts of an organism, but it is living through and through. We ourselves are producers, not products; agents, not machines. We play a part in the process, and to some extent under God we direct it. The part played thus by personality in the making of history is something which we do well to stress, and it helps us the better to appreciate the part played by the supreme Personality of all History, God Himself, in the government of the world and men, and the part played by the Incarnate Son of God Himself in our redemption. There is no room, in short, for mechanistic theories in a universe in which the decisive factors are life and mind and will. Science may reduce life to mere physiological, chemical, and physical processes; but in so doing it is mere description, not explanation, we are being given; it is appearance, not reality.

The doctrine of Providence is beset with difficulties on all sides. It is none the less part and parcel of the instinctive Christian conception of God as revealed in Jewish ethical monotheism and substantiated by Christ's teaching. It is, moreover, the very nerve of the Christian's experience of God in Christ Jesus.

Objections are urged from the scientific standpoint to the effect that the world is governed by a law-abiding God whose method of work we have come to appreciate in fuller measure as the result of our deeper insight into the evolutionary process. Does not the thought of God as a super-designer, working from outside upon the world and intervening from time to time by way of miracles, belong to a circle of thought associated with a now discredited Deism? Does not the doctrine of Providence stand or fall with this discredited conception of Deity? One of the most cherished of all our modern scientific concepts is that of the reign of law and order. This must surely be abandoned if we are to think of God in the

old heathen way as One who intervenes from time to time by miracles to adjust things, a *Deus ex machina* in short.

We should reply to the effect that the Christian conception of God by no means abolishes the reign of law and order, whether in the physical or the spiritual world. What it does do is to substitute a personal for an impersonal control. In place of a rigid mechanical determinism, it gives us the thought of a Universe governed in the interests of an historic teleology by a free God exercising an over-ruling authority in the interests of a soteriological purpose. We have not the reign of absolute impersonal law, but the sovereign purpose of an All-powerful Lawgiver, working under self-imposed limitations. The nature of His Divine Providence and its method of exercise we gather from the character of the God we serve. His omnipotence is not the reign of a rigid absolutism which can brook no opposition, but rather the omnipotence of a Love which uses love's methods. These must be ethical through and through in accord with the character of the God whose methods they are. They thus are revealed in a patient working through difficulties, inevitable if He has chosen to co-operate with our wills and self-limited Himself to the extent of granting us a measure of human freedom, involving as this does a limited power on our part to frustrate His designs and thwart His purposes. The supreme revelation of His method of work is the Incarnation. Here in this we see Him as a personal God at work in our midst for redemptive ends. Here we behold Him prepared to make Himself at one with us in the struggle against evil and imperfection. Doubts as to His providential care in the face of the dark problems of evil and sin are set at rest, not by *a priori* speculation, but by personal trust. Faith, not theory, is the way in which He has taught us to deal with the nightmare of doubt and mis-giving in the presence of much in the world which seems to deny the existence of any God, least of all One whom we can call Good. There are theories which seek to get over our intellectual difficulties by suggesting a God who is not so much self-limited as essentially limited from the nature of things, a God, in short, who is doing His best and who, there-



fore, deserves not our criticism but our sympathy. Such a God fails to satisfy one of the deepest instincts of our religious experience. The Christian belief in God as revealed in Christ is belief in One who is equal to the demands made upon His resources by the world He has created and the creatures for whose existence He is ultimately responsible. Personal trust in Him as revealed in Christ and as known in religious experience is the royal road through faith to an unshakable conviction of the final triumph of good over evil, and the assurance that to them that love Him, all things are working together for good. A personal God, in whom, therefore, will is a reality and not an anthropomorphism, is One who can plan and purpose, One who can rule and overrule. If this same Being is One of unlimited Love, Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, and we know it not by hearsay evidence but by the sacrifice of Calvary, we can safely leave our lives in His Hands and trust that all is well in a way impossible if we believe ourselves to be the mere playthings of an impersonal and unfeeling Fate.

Moreover, the Incarnation with its climax through Calvary to the Resurrection and Ascension throws a flood of light upon the real meaning of human life and God's plan and method in the work of redemption. There is no meaning to pain, suffering, and death short of the light shed upon it all by the Easter message. There is no solution of the dark problem of evil and sin apart from the revelation of its significance for God in the light of the Cross of Calvary.

A whole Christian philosophy of life arises from this revelation and the Christian doctrine of Providence is part and parcel of it. It stands or falls with the acceptance or rejection of these historic facts and their interpretation as embodied in our Christian Creed. Life in the light of these data is seen to be not the explanation of experience, but an education through experience. Now we see as in a mirror darkly. We have not the whole plan of God and His whole method of work before us. We have, however, in experience, something by which we may judge of part of it so far as it impinges upon us at a sensitive point. Those whose Christian experience of trust

in Him enables them to speak of God's personal dealings with them as persons are usually silent and leave to others the work of indictment of God and His methods of work. Trust in Him has given them a key to the meaning of the mystery of pain and the enigma of life. Education through experience they know, and its value for character they have tested. Full explanation of why God has chosen this method rather than some other, seemingly less painful and more justifiable, they leave to others to discuss, and are content to await His explanation, in full assurance that He can and will make it plain in His own good time.

Without developing all the implications of this line of thought, suffice it to say that we adhere to a view which can still see a measure of compatibility between Design and Evolution, which are not necessarily antagonistic and mutually exclusive. We should contend that the idea of God as working in history through laws He Himself had ordained, and which therefore, though they bind us, do not necessarily bind Him in any way such as would make Him in any absolute sense subordinate to them, is a view which is rational on the supposition that the Deity is Personal, Transcendent as well as Immanent in the world and in human life. We admit that the Christian doctrine of Providence must go if we adhere to a purely immanentist view of God in His relationship to the world. We reject this, however, on the ground that, in the last analysis, a purely immanentist philosophy fails to do justice to personality, human and divine, which is our working principle and which is the philosophical presupposition we accept as alone adequate to cover the data of the Christian experience. From this philosophical presupposition we deduce the complementary concepts of Divine Transcendence and Divine Immanence. These two are meaningless if viewed as mutually exclusive when used to define the relation of a personal God to the world. If God is personal, then the relation of Himself to the world must be that of a God who is at once transcendent above and immanent in the world and human life, both as Creator of all that is and Sustainer of all He has created.

Enough has, I hope, been said by way of an introduction to the chapters which follow, and in which I have sought to deal with some of the crucial points at issue, in a comparison of the Christian world-view with that of rival philosophical postulates. Whether our interpretation of life or that of other philosophies is the truer must be settled by the degree to which in experience the philosophy is found adequate to do full justice to the many-sided character of our human life and to explain its varied experiences. It is our hope that these chapters will at least help to define what the issues are which confront those of us who still cling to our Christian belief in spite of much in modern speculation which is alien and antagonistic to it. Our trouble to-day is that we Christians have in Christ Jesus a religious experience and we cannot find a philosophy with room in it to cover the content of all we hold most dear. Hence our intellectual difficulties; hence the demand for the reconstruction of belief; hence also our effort to construct a philosophy of our own, as a system of thought and an interpretation of life adequate at once to satisfy the volitional, the emotional, and the rational elements in our complex human nature. The world awaits such a philosophy corresponding to its needs and adequate to satisfy them. In the construction of such a philosophy, we believe that Christianity has a distinct contribution to make. Something of what that distinct contribution is, I have sought to indicate in the chapters which follow.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONCEPTION OF ETERNAL LIFE

#### I. INTRODUCTION

OUR task is not to prove the Christian doctrine of Eternal Life, but to state it, to deduce its implications, and thus to commend it as one amongst other rival theories of Immortality.

Perhaps we shall best approach the exposition of the distinctive contribution of Christianity by a consideration of what it is not.

1st. Eternal Life for the Christian does not mean that we shall continue to live in the memory of our friends and within the recollection of historians and searchers after the antique, long subsequent to the time when we ourselves have ceased to be. The thought suggested, for example, in George Eliot's idea of a "Choir Invisible" or in Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird*—where the dead come to life again if and when they are remembered—falls far short of the fringe of the Christian belief.

2nd. We do not believe in a mere continuance within the life of the race after the individual has perished. We do not look simply for a racial survival, where the persistence of the type compensates for the death of the single being. "The spiritual continuity of the family" after we are gone, a survival in the memory of posterity, or the assurance that our good deeds will abide as a contribution, however slight, towards the sum treasures of an advancing humanity; an immortality of fame or, as in the case of most of us, an immortality of deserved oblivion,—these anæmic substitutes for the rich content of the Christian teaching are cold comfort.

3rd. Eternal Life is not to be confounded with the Greek

belief in the immortality of the soul or with the Eastern pantheistic yearning for absorption into God. It is rather by contrast with these two last conceptions that the distinctive characteristics of the Christian teaching may best be studied and appreciated.

Man's speculations and ideas concerning the world to come have been determined mainly by his conception of God, and the belief in immortality has grown with the development of the religious consciousness. The Christian contribution, therefore, is found expressed not in intellectual, æsthetic, or even moral concepts, but primarily, essentially, and fundamentally, in religious and spiritual terms. Eternal Life for the Christian is Life with God, and an immortality without God would be Eternal Death. Such an existence as this last is quite conceivable and strong arguments can be adduced in favour of it as against the thought of annihilation, but life without God for the Christian is Hell, and we do not propose to consider it here,<sup>1</sup> except in so far as it is thought of in contrast to the positive conception of Heaven. One of the tasks before us is to substitute for the traditional pictures of Heaven and Hell, conceptions corresponding more really and vitally to our moral and spiritual instincts, as the result of our deepened knowledge of the Being and Character of God, revealed to us in Christian history and experience. We have outgrown the traditional phraseology, in that we have in times past lost touch with the spiritual content which that phraseology was meant to convey. We have substituted literal prose for poetic imagery. We have endeavoured to elaborate in great detail the beauty or the ugliness of the husk and lost sight of the kernel. A recovery of the spiritual content by sensitive souls has led to a growing dissatisfaction with the traditional form, and a desire to substitute a new form, less liable to misinterpretation and more adequate to reclothe the spiritual truth recovered. Whether a better picture of the reality for which Heaven stands, than that suggested by the Apocalypse of a "Blessed Home," can be discovered, remains to be seen. Certainly a glance, for

<sup>1</sup> See further on *The Mythology of the Beyond*, ch. ix.



example, at Dean Farrar's *Eternal Hope* with the quotations there given of the ideas of various writers concerning "Heaven" and "Hell" shows to what a lamentable misuse the terms can be put. Such pictures explain the revolt and amply justify the attitude of the average man to-day, who neither believes in the existence of such places nor, if they do exist, has any ardent desire to make their nearer acquaintance. Let it not be thought, however, that a revolt against names destroys the reality for which those names stand. I am, personally, as convinced of the reality behind the word "Hell" as I am of the truth conveyed by the word "Heaven." The great Italian seer, Dante, divided his subject into three parts, corresponding to three great truths, "Hell," "Purgatory," "Paradise." In this he may yet prove to have been nearer to the truth than the modern mind is inclined to admit. What we can do to-day is to lay the stress upon the spiritual truths these words are meant to teach.

The whole emphasis, therefore, in this chapter, will fall upon the ethical and spiritual implications in the Christian doctrine. We are freer now to discard the Oriental imagery and the materialization of the spiritual which has occupied so large a place in popular conceptions of what the Church is supposed to teach on the subject of Eternal Life. It is clear that any attempt to describe a spiritual reality in terms of human language must involve the clothing of the truth in imagery borrowed from the thought-forms of our existence in time and space. We think of Heaven as a place only because no image we try to form of the spiritual reality can escape a spatial and temporal setting in our minds. Our only hope of entering more fully into the depths of the spiritual significance of the Christian teaching will be to lift the whole subject out of its material setting into the realm of moral and spiritual values; to consider it as a relationship between the finite spirit and God, a state of being rather than a position in a locality.

In this we shall find ourselves fully in accord with our Lord's own method. He filled the material imagery in men's minds of the Other World with a deep and rich con-

tent.<sup>1</sup> Nothing is more significant than the gulf separating the pre-Christian Apocalyptic from our Lord's Eschatological teaching; the contrast between the crude materialism of the Jewish hope and the ethical and spiritual character of Christ's Kingdom. The Christian teaching has its roots in Old Testament Eschatology. Its special setting within the circle of other distinctively Christian truths marks it apart, however, as something more than a mere synthesis of previous beliefs derived from Jewish and Greek sources.

Christianity claims that the religious consciousness—with which the doctrine of immortality is largely bound up—has reached its deepest and purest experience of God in Christ Jesus and differs not in degree but in kind from that of the worshipper who sought communion with the Supreme Being before the day of Pentecost.

If, as we hold, the union of the human and the Divine in the Person of Christ enabled the Divine Spirit *for the first time* to enter fully into human personality, a more intimate and close association of man with God has been made possible as the result of the Incarnation and Work of Christ. The Coming of the Holy Ghost—the Advent of the Divine-Human Spirit into a redeemed humanity—was creative of a *new order* of religious experience. It constituted a new phenomenon in the long history of the soul's quest for God. It resulted in a changed relationship between the human spirit and the Divine Spirit, realized first in the Person of Christ and subsequently in the Christian life hid with Christ in God. This is of immense significance when we come to study more closely the specific Christian experience of God in Christ Jesus, as constituting the content of Eternal Life here and hereafter.

Let us further note that the Scriptural Anthropology begins with God, and in the light of His relationship to man as Creator and Redeemer, deduces its doctrine of the origin, constitution, significance, value, and destiny of human nature.

The Christian Eschatology cannot be studied in isolation

<sup>1</sup> In the teaching of our Lord on the meaning of the Kingdom we have what Professor von Dobschütz has aptly called "transmuted eschatology."

from this circle of religious ideas, and its true significance is only seen in its setting within the whole body of revealed truth concerning God and Man contained in Christianity.

We propose, therefore, to consider more closely the significance of the Incarnation ; Christ's revelation of the Being and Character of God ; the Life and Work of Christ, His Resurrection and Ascension—so far as these throw light upon the distinctive features of the Christian conception of Eternal Life.

We shall pass on to study the Christian experience in Christ, as illustrated in the Pauline and Johannine theology. We shall then be in a better position to face the question of Personal Immortality and the significance of the Resurrection Body in this connexion. The problem of the Kingdom and the Individual—Heaven as a community of spirits—will lead us finally to the question to what extent the Christian ideas on these subjects are in accord with the best philosophical speculations of our day.

## II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INCARNATION. ETERNAL LIFE LIVED IN THE MIDST OF TIME

The Christian contribution to the doctrine of Eternal Life cannot be dissociated from our belief in the Being and Character of God revealed in the Incarnation. For the Christian this is a revelation of God in terms of Human Life, a revelation of Eternal Life in time and space. We have no need, therefore, to speculate as to its content. If we ask in what does Eternal Life consist, the answer God has given us is seen in a miracle of Divine humiliation and self-sacrificing Love—a demonstration of God's Essence as Eternal Giver—Love spending itself freely and without stint in the service of men.

Now what does this mean ? If Eternal Life is God's Life, and, for us, Life in God, it is revealed to be, in His case, *not* a sublime self-satisfaction, not an existence into which no pain of finitude or suffering incident to our terrestrial life enters, but a life with a Cross in it, and this because sacrifice is

involved in the very nature of God Himself. We see in Christ Jesus, God giving Himself, willing to bear the burden of our finite existence, suffering with us, energizing and active within our human nature against all that renders life for us a thing of dark shadows. We see in Him the embodiment of a victorious Spirit wrestling with sin and death. God for the Christian is thus known to be no exalted Impassible Deity, separated by an unbridgeable gulf from the world ; no impersonal Absolute, untouched and untouchable by the world's pain, but One whose Love necessitates His willingness to share our infirmities, to work in us for our redemption, to achieve through us man's conquest of the many ills that flesh is heir to. If the Life of God thus revealed is of this kind, then for us also Heaven is no state of ease and selfish enjoyment, no self-centred existence. If God's Nature is the Omnipotence of Love, man's Heaven must be made of the same "stuff," i.e. it consists in sharing to an ever fuller degree a life of self-sacrifice and service within a community bound together in union and communion with God. God's Incarnate Life reveals to us in what Reality consists. This is its significance for our enquiry—a revelation of what Eternal Life really is as lived by God within the limits of human life and, therefore, of the kind of life it is possible for men to live here and now, and, living it, to taste of Eternal Life in time and space.

Can we analyse its content still further ? I think we can, if we study it as Christ lived it and as we experience it in Him.

### III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST, HIS DEATH, RESURRECTION, AND ASCENSION

The Godward side of the Incarnate Life is one beyond our grasp except so far as we are afforded glimpses into a life the outstanding feature of which is a God-consciousness as startling as is the Christ-consciousness of St. Paul. For Jesus, communion with God is so intimate, so vitally part of His being, so uninterrupted and continuous, unclouded and

untainted, as to differ not in degree but in kind from that of any recorded intercourse of the human soul with God. In this He stands alone in a unique relationship to God, unshared in its depths by any mortal. Justice is only done to its significance when we have named it an ontological relationship, a unity of Being, which constitutes, not similarity or affinity, but identity of Essence between Himself and God. He is Son in His own right and claims the Father as His in a sense never before or since experienced or shared by the saints in the long history of the soul's quest after fullness of communion with God. The position thus accorded Him places Him within the supramundane world and within the sphere of the Eternal at any and every moment of His earthly life. That is to say that for Him Eternal Life was no future inheritance, nor the promise of a fuller abidingness hereafter than that at present experienced. Whilst therefore we recognize in His Life an experience of Eternal Life realized in spite of spatial and temporal conditions, we cannot go on to claim for ourselves a like richness of Eternal Life here and now. We have to draw a distinction between His experience of Eternal Life and ours. If we draw this distinction in terms indicated by Baron von Hügel in his masterly exposition,<sup>1</sup> we shall say that Eternity, full Abidingness, is known to God in Christ and Christ in God alone. That further—

“this full Eternity is not, and never will be, man's own; and also that such experience as he has of it is never pure and separate, but ever of it only in, through, and over against, his various, ever more or less successive, directly human experiences.”

When, however, we turn to the manward side of Christ's Life, viewed as a presentation of Eternal Life lived in time and under terrestrial conditions, we see that it has a twofold aspect and content. It derives its power from the heavenly sphere and it expresses itself in self-sacrificing devotion to the service of men. Christ is in the world and yet not of it. But being “not of it” does not mean for Him a mere quietism,

<sup>1</sup> *Eternal Life*, pp. 231-2.



achieved in solitary isolation and negative asceticism. His is essentially an active life of well-doing. "Other-worldliness" is the key to the secret of its strength and inspiration, but this world is the sphere of its activity. In it is seen the consecration of all human life, the ideal pattern of the truly human revealed by the presence and inspiration of the Divine in it.

Now, if we watch this life of Christ as it unfolds itself before us in the pages of the Gospels, we see it fixing upon all that makes our human existence beautiful and sweet. It sets the seal of Divine approval upon just those ethical and spiritual values which men are bidden to prize above gold and rubies. Human love, friendship, purity of heart, nobility of purpose, unselfish devotion, pity for the poor and needy, sympathy in the presence of suffering, and the kindly word of counsel in need—these are the things which win the Master's approval and blessing. It is because His life is so intimately associated with these values and this spirit that inevitably He attracts to Himself the best in human life of His day and equally inevitably arouses the active hostility of the world-spirit.

The result is persecution, conflict, an inevitable struggle between Good and Evil, Light and Darkness, Love and Hate. In this struggle the true values of human life are more clearly revealed by contrast, and upon the issue of this struggle will depend the question as to whether things true, pure, honest, of good report, are or are not the real meaning and purpose of God for men's life. The victorious issue in the Resurrection is consequently seen to be God's vindication of all that justifies man's idealism. It is a life triumphant through death over the world-spirit and settles finally for faith the issue of the struggle between the material and the spiritual, the lower and the higher levels, in man's complex nature.

The reality of this struggle is emphasized over and over again in our Lord's teaching and the necessity of man's choice made plain beyond words. The moral issues of life are clearly indicated. Nowhere is this better brought out than in the teaching of the Fourth Gospel, where we see the world-spirit in

its conflict with the Spirit of God, the Kingdom of Darkness in its antagonism to the Kingdom of Light, Satan against God in human life. So in the Apocalypse, Christ's victory is seen to be the triumph of man in the Second Adam, and faith's conquest of the world is faith's clear insight into the meaning of Calvary's tragedy and the triumphant issue in the Resurrection and Session of Christ at the right hand of God. Good is seen to have survival value. God's last word is not death, but life ; not an eternal dualism between God and Satan, but the final triumph of the Good and the final defeat of the Bad. If then we ask in what does man's true life consist and what kind of life has survival value, the answer is given in the kind of life Christ lived, which proved triumphant over suffering, pain, and death and received God's blessing in the Resurrection.

We are introduced to a *qualitative* difference in the content of life here. We are given a choice between a lower and a higher form of existence here, with an assurance that the higher has survival value, the lower has not.

Dr. Liddon in one of his sermons <sup>1</sup> has brought out this contrast in the Fourth Gospel very vividly :

"The world is human nature, sacrificing the spiritual to the material, the future to the present, the unseen and eternal to that which touches the senses and which perishes with time. . . .

"It is a mighty flood of thoughts, feelings, principles of action, conventional prejudices, dislikes, attachments, which has been gathering around human life for ages, impregnating it, impelling it, moulding it, degrading it. . . .

"It is a great tradition of materialized life to which every age and individual adds its quota."

This is a very vivid picture of the world as the author of the Fourth Gospel depicts it and as we ourselves know it. The Christian knows that life on such a level has no promise of futurity, no hope of permanence. It is essentially life divorced from the Spirit of God, if not life in open antagonism to Him. How is it to be overcome? If, by a death to it,

<sup>1</sup> *Easter in St. Paul's*, Sermon xxii.

life on a higher level can be attained here, is this the Eternal Life we are seeking? Christianity answers that it is, and points first to Christ's own life on earth as a proof that a better form of true life can be lived, and secondly to the Resurrection as a proof that such a life by contrast has a future before it.

There was no change of purpose in His Life as the result of His Death. He emerged from the grave with the same aims and the same ideals. His Spirit ever since has steadily striven to inculcate the same lofty enterprise in the hearts of men. His earthly lifetime was guided by one supreme motive—the foundation of the Kingdom. After His Resurrection we do not find Him diverted from this to other issues. What does this mean? Surely that all the young life seemingly prematurely cut off by sudden death will still through its gates emerge with the same goal in view, the same end to be accomplished. Under different conditions, with increased facilities, we may well believe that those who gave their lives in the service of a cause which can be identified in the smallest degree with the Divine Purpose will be found still eager to progress, still willing to endure, still capable of activity for the same end. Life's purposes are not frustrated by death, and any finite centre of ethical and spiritual activity has a future before it of which death cannot rob it. The spirits of just men have still their part to play in the spiritual warfare of which St. Paul draws so vivid and dramatic a picture in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Christ is still the leader in that struggle. There is war still in Heaven, and He does not lack followers there as here.

If it be urged that our thought of the Hereafter is that of a Sabbath *rest* for the people of God, the answer is that in His case "rest was not quitting the busy career." There is a perfect rest for us within the heart of God, which none the less is intensest activity in His service. "He, watching over Israel, slumbers not nor sleeps." The Christian conception of God in terms of Christ is that of a dynamic activity, not a static passivity. So will it be for the Christian. We look not for an attenuated existence, but for the "wages of going on."

Such, then, is the significance of Christ's Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension as a revelation in time and space of a certain kind of life which can be lived under terrestrial conditions, and which has in it something Death cannot destroy and Evil cannot finally conquer.

#### IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE IN CHRIST

Now, when we examine the content of the Christian life in Christ, we find that it consists in just this life on a higher level, to which, as we have seen, survival value is attached. There is no conflict between the kind of life Christ demanded as the condition of membership in His Kingdom and the kind of life man strives to live in Christ by the power of the Risen Lord in him. The difference is simply that between an ideal set before men for imitation and man's imperfect realization of that ideal in his upward struggle towards the Christian standard of life. If we compare our Lord's teaching and example in the Gospel narratives with St. Paul's description of the Christian life hid with Christ in God or the Johannine teaching concerning the meaning of Eternal Life, we shall find that we are dealing with the same thing and, what is of more importance to note, in every case it is a question of the *quality* of the life lived and its relationship to God.

(a) Take St. Paul's experience of the Risen Lord and his teaching concerning the Holy Spirit within him and within the Body of Christ, the Community of the Redeemed on earth. In what does it consist? It is an experience of a new spiritual power of the Divine within the human personality, mediated through Christ and securing for the believer a changed life. It is the life of the Spirit in us. It is a present possession, an experienced relationship, a felt reality, a life-giving, grace-bestowing power, able to transform and to transfigure the man, to direct and control the whole life and to fix its purposes and aims in accordance not with man's wishes but with what he feels is God's intention, God's plan for his life, the purpose of Divine Love for him. The life

of this Spirit is shared by others within the Community, and is the binding link not only of the soul with God, but of soul with soul, brother with brother, in a realized fellowship, a social organism, a Divine Society. The Christian life is lived within the Kingdom of God into which each one is incorporated by a spiritual birth. This Kingdom is of Divine foundation, a present reality in the world. At the same time it is in the future, as a reward, an achievement, a goal and end of Divine operation, the fulfilment of an eternal purpose.

It is a lived experience of life on a new level, through a new birth. It is achieved as the result of a Divine movement, with man's co-operation, by way of renunciation, the *Via Negativa*. None the less, it is a life of intense activity within the Society in open antagonism and conflict with all that is Evil and in self-sacrificing devotion to the good of the Whole.

It is not a renunciation as a barren negation of all that makes this life dear, but the consecration at a higher level of all that is deepest and most precious in the life of man. The redeemed are in the world and yet not of it. The Other-worldliness of their life consists in this—that they live in conscious communion with One whose Presence is a felt reality and whose life is the source and power by which they are enabled to win moral victories, maintain themselves at a higher level of life than that of the world around them, judge accurately the relative value of things material and spiritual, and in all things strive to follow in the steps of the Master.

St. Paul brings out vividly the close union of the believer with Christ which begins with a spiritual experience—justification by faith—and continues in an ever-deepening assimilation of the life of God, a progressive sanctification in Christ Jesus. The power of His Resurrection is thus a felt reality in human life.

This experience is not only a power able to change human life here and to fashion anew human character. It also opens out before the eyes of faith a prospect and a possibility of a life hereafter quite different in quality from mere physical survival. There is thus the hope, nay, the assurance, of a



*blessed* immortality. The blessedness is guaranteed by His redemptive work which has removed the sharpness of death. Its sting due to sin is withdrawn. The future has no guilty terrors for the soul which trusts in His redeeming love. Beyond the Veil lies the Father's House. The Christian looks not for a life of endless duration, a prolongation indefinitely of mere existence, a reproduction of the conditions and limitations, the hindrances and stumbling-blocks incident to our sinful lives here with the pain of contrast, the guilt of sin, the sense of failure. It is a blessed immortality and already we taste of it here in the joy of forgiveness, the sense of reconciliation, the knowledge that the bonds of human love which link us to those who have passed on before us to the nearer presence of God are stronger than Death and hold for us the promise of reunion in a higher state of life into which the pain of separation cannot enter.

(b) If we turn now from the Pauline to the Johannine conception we find that the writer's whole thought centres in the revelation of Eternal Life manifested in time and space in the Person of the Incarnate, whose presence is the Light and Life of men. To have found Him is to have passed from death to life, knowledge of Him is eternal life, obedience to His commands secures this for the believer as a present possession.

(c) Compare this with our Lord's own teaching. The outstanding feature of His eschatology is the Kingdom of God.

It is of Divine origin and a present reality in the world. It takes root deep down in human nature as the result of a Divine operation. It is present fact and future possibility, here and to come, in the present, in the near future, in the eschatological future. It is immanent and transcendent, within the two spheres, the terrestrial and supra-terrestrial. Its presence is a declaration of war between it and the world-spirit. This warfare is carried on within the individual soul and in the community life. In the individual, it is a New Birth and involves a continuous struggle for the life of the true self as against the false. In society, it finds expression

in the striving after a better order. It has the promise of a final consummation in the individual—the triumph of the true self; in the community, the realization of the New Jerusalem.

Thus whether we consider our Lord's conception of the Kingdom, or the Pauline conception of the Divine Spirit in Christian experience, or the Johannine interpretation of Eternal Life, we are dealing with a reality which is fundamentally the same. It is a life of Divine origin, of ethical and spiritual content, immanent in the individual and the communal life and yet withal transcendent, never fully expressed or realized under terrestrial conditions, yet pointing to unlimited possibilities here and hereafter.

What is it? The Divine in human life. The Eternal Life of God as a present possession and a future inheritance for those who have found Christ and are found of Him. No mere futurity of bliss, but a present experience. Such reality was revealed in the Incarnate Life of God. Its content is found in Him and its nature and purpose for us are to be sought in an experience of One who from the depth of His own nature, *Divine* and *Human*, and therefore with a full knowledge of the meaning of both, said, "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou didst send." Such life, because of its origin and quality, is deathless. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." It is His Life—Resurrection Life, known in its exhaustless depths by Him alone and yet shared by Christians so far as their imperfect lives approximate to His and so far as they can be said to live in Him and He in them. It is thus a distinctively Christian experience and a foretaste of Heaven. The Redeemed know here something of the Sabbath rest.<sup>1</sup>

An important conclusion would seem to follow.

There is a continuity between Eternal Life here and here-

<sup>1</sup> The only proof Jesus Himself ever offered of the reality of Eternal Life, apart from His living it Himself, and bringing life and immortality to light in the Gospel, was His clear insistence upon God as the "God of the living" and the consequent guarantee that communion with God was something Death could not destroy.

after. Between our experience here of God immanent and our future experience hereafter of God transcendent, there cannot be so vast a gulf as to make the future Beatific Vision different *in toto* from what we know of it now in communion with God in Christ. Here and now we transcend time and space in an act of intense experience of fullness of life.

We look for a progressive realization in ever-increasing measure of this experience, under other conditions more favourable, in a higher form of existence, into which the hindrances and limitations we now know as obstacles to our striving will not enter. Whilst, however, the nature of these new conditions is at present hardly conceivable to our finite minds and "eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, nor hath it entered into the mind of man to conceive what the Lord God has prepared for them that unfeignedly love Him"—yet the experience will not be so utterly remote or different in kind from that at present enjoyed, as is sometimes suggested.

Our knowledge of God here and hereafter differs in degree only. Whilst therefore it is true to say that "if we were in the heaven we seek, we should not be in the heaven we want," if our earth-formed pictures of it are blurred distortions of the Reality itself, yet they do give us real knowledge so far as they go. "He hath set eternity in our hearts" here and now.

We have thus, as the result of our enquiry so far, an introduction to a series of ideas essentially religious and carrying with them the validity not only of an historical revelation in the Person of Christ, but also of a personal religious experience.

## V. PERSONAL IMMORTALITY

What guarantee have we of such a continuity between our Eternal Life experienced here and that to be enjoyed in a larger Hereafter as shall conserve our distinctive personality? Will our individuality, or perhaps we had better say our Christian personality—that new self which is ours as the result of our communion with Him here—will this, which He respects here in our relationship to Him, be preserved?

Now, the Christian doctrine of personal immortality has

never in its long history been free from an insidious danger of Eastern origin, due to a complete difference of standpoint between Eastern and Western modes of thought. Pantheism is the real foe to the Christian doctrine and over and over again has been confused with it, even amongst Christian thinkers. It derives its strength both from philosophical thought and from certain types of religious experience. In our own day it is associated in our minds with Philosophical Monism and certain phases of Mysticism. In defence of the Christian teaching at this point we would urge two considerations: (1) the experience of communion with God in Christ; (2) the resurrection of the body.

(1) The Communion of the Soul with God.

In this Christian experience we have the Divine and the human in closest relationship and union. What is the result? Not the absorption, annihilation, obsession of the human by the Divine, or even the suspicion of the beginning here of such a final consummation. The human personality in its union with the Divine experiences a fuller realization of its true self as the result of its intensest activity in communion with Another. There is an expansion, elevation, purification, intensification of the human, a shedding of the false self if you like, a truer realization of the true self, a growth towards the ideal self, but not the loss of anything such as would render it impossible to distinguish it from the Other with whom it is in communion.

The sense of separation in the midst of the soul's deepest realization of its affinity with God in the act of communion is the guarantee that He will respect our freedom hereafter as He does now, and preserve for us such a measure of separation from Himself as shall make communion possible. Our end is not Nirvana, not annihilation, absorption, not a supra-personal or impersonal existence within the Divine, but *communion*, with its sense of dependence, likeness, need, desire, knowledge of exhaustless possibility of a higher becoming as the result of its vital union with the Eternal Divine Fullness of God. If it were God's purpose to obliterate our single individual personality as a distinct entity over against Himself, then

in our present experience of Eternal Life here we should surely begin to feel that such communion with Him was leading to a gradual loss of the sense of our distinctness from Him. There are, it is true, mystic experiences recorded in which the worshipper is described as feeling lost in the vastness of Eternal Being and forgetting the sense of self in the presence of the Over-Soul. Apart, however, from the abnormal character of such experiences, we claim that the true Christian mystic is most really himself and most truly human in his intensest experience of God. And further, communion is only possible as a relationship between two. If one is absorbed, the communion ceases. And, moreover, the Christian belief in the Divine Love gives dignity to human nature and makes us bold to affirm that our individual relationship to God is of value in His sight. He values *my* communion, *my* love for Him, *my* imperfect response to His advance. His love for me is my assurance that He will not lightly lose me or blot me out. My communion with Him, because it is *mine*, is unshared and unshareable by any other finite spirit amidst the vast multitude. No one else can take my place or be a substitute for me in the relationship in which I am to God who loves me. The human duplicate has never been made by God, and I, as a finite centre of experience, am unique. Blot me out of creation, and humanity in the eyes of Omnipotent Love is lacking. So long as there is one lost sheep in the wilderness, the fold is incomplete, and no other sheep put there can fill my vacant place. This is the Christian doctrine of the value of the unit and it helps us to combat that persistent attempt to depreciate the value of human personality, the true significance of which seems always liable to slip from the grasp of the Eastern mind and accounts for the strong Pantheistic tendency in all systems, whether religious or philosophical, which are content to search for Reality below the level of the highest we know, namely, a truly human personality. This is the strongest argument of Christianity for a belief in personal immortality as against the dream of absorption into God.

Let us examine, however, another line of argument



suggested by a consideration of the meaning of the Resurrection Body, the significance of which, perhaps, in this connexion has not been sufficiently grasped.

(2) The Resurrection of the Body.

Westcott<sup>1</sup> points out that the Resurrection—

“introduces us to a novel phase of being, of which we feel even in the presence of this revelation that we can know only a part darkly. For the Resurrection is not like any one of the recorded miracles of raising from the dead. It is not a restoration to the old life, to its wants, to its special limitations, to its inevitable close, but the revelation of a new life foreshadowing new powers of action and a new mode of being. It issues not in death, but in the Ascension, for which it is the preparation and the condition. It is not an extension of an existence with which we are acquainted, but the manifestation of an existence for which we hope. . . . It is not a withdrawal from men or a laying aside of humanity, complete, final, and immediate, but the pledge of an abiding communion of a Saviour with the fullness of our nature on earth and in heaven. It is not the putting off of the body, but the transfiguration of it. . . . The Lord rose from the grave, and those who had known Him before, knew that He was the same and yet changed. This is the sum of the Apostles’ testimony, the new Gospel of the world.”

Our task here is not to enter fully into a discussion of the vexed question of the nature of the Resurrection Body or the credibility of its existence.<sup>2</sup> Our concern is rather with the spiritual implications of the conception.

If we adopt the words of the 4th Article—“Christ did truly rise again from death, and took again His body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man’s nature, wherewith He ascended into heaven and there sitteth”—as expressing the Christian belief, so far as human language can express a spiritual state and mode of being of which we can form no definite idea which is not clothed in thought-forms derived from our present limited existence in time and space, and, therefore, coloured by these very limitations which do not exist in the case of that we wish to describe,

<sup>1</sup> *Gospel of the Resurrection*, p. 58 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See further, p. 161 ff.

certain conclusions inevitably follow which go to mark the Christian doctrine as distinct and incompatible with other rival theories that have prevailed in the history of human speculation on these matters.

*First*, we are to look for the Resurrection of the whole man. Christianity parts company definitely and finally from the Greek concept of the Immortality of the Soul and the dualism of Body and Soul.

“ In the Person of Christ we see the whole of man, his body and soul, raised together from the grave. No part is left behind. The whole complex nature is raised and glorified. It is not that the soul only lives, nor yet that the body, such as it was before, is restored to its former vigour. The Saviour, as far as we regard His Manhood, is not unclothed, to use St. Paul’s image, but clothed upon. Nothing is taken away, but something is added by which all that was before present is transfigured. ‘The corruptible puts on incorruption: the mortal puts on immortality.’ ”

The redemption of the *whole* man is the pith and substance of this teaching. It cuts at the root of those theories which seek to disparage the body, to despise the material, and to foster a false spiritualism which thrives at the expense of much in man’s life which the Incarnation has hallowed and sanctified.

We are taught not to despise the body as a temporarily-indwelt shell from which we may hope to escape with advantage. We are saved from an impossible dualism which exalts soul at the expense of body or a crude materialism which seeks to define the former in terms of the latter. We are reminded that man is a complex whole, that body and soul are strictly contemporaneous in their origin, and have profound and ineffaceable relations to each other.<sup>1</sup>

So the Christian teaching is :

(a) That the body is essential to man’s completeness, whether in this or a future life.

<sup>1</sup> See Liddon, *Some Elements of Religion*, p. 101, pp. 114-15. P. 114 : “The soul is only severed from the body at death by a violent wrench. Would the soul, permanently severed from the body, still be, properly speaking, man? Would it not really be some other being? . . . If the body did not rise, man would, by dying, not simply enter upon a

(b) That the body is not the governing element in man's nature. It is a body of humiliation.

(c) A flood of glory has been shed on it and it has great prospects, a splendid future. Our nature as a whole has been ennobled as well as invigorated by the Son of God.

"Bending, in the immensity of His Love, from the throne of heaven, He has taken it upon Him in its integrity, body and soul alike, and joined it by an indissoluble union to His own Eternal Person. . . .

"Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He likewise Himself took part in the same."

"We shall die as do the creatures around us; whether by violence or by slow decay. But He will gather up what death has left, and will transfigure it with the splendour of a new life. . . . Sown in corruption, it will be raised in incorruption. . . . Little indeed can we understand that inaccessibility to disease, that radiant beauty, that superiority to distance and material obstructions when moving about through space, that spirituality, in short, which awaits but which will not destroy it."

What is the ground of this expectation? "According to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself" (Phil. iii. 21).

Some practical consequences follow. (1) Respect for the body. It has a future and must be kept "in temperance, soberness, and chastity." (2) It must be trained to fulfil its function as an adequate instrument of the Spirit. (3) It must be presented a living sacrifice, in work and in that best of work, worship.

A *second* consideration arises respecting the body's function

new stage of being; he would exist as a different order or species of creature. His moral history would have changed its conditions and character." See further Liddon, *Easter in St. Paul's*, Sermon xxiii: "According to Revelation, death is the disturbance of that union of soul and body which constitutes the complete man. Death thereby introduces a morbid condition of existence, a strictly abnormal separation of the two constitutive parts of our being; and this irregular interruption of the true life of man ends at the Resurrection, when man re-enters upon the original completeness of his existence."

here and hereafter as a means of differentiating between individual and individual. If in the Hereafter our personality is to remain distinct and distinguishable from God and we are to take our place as a unit within a vast community, will the body be the means by which we can be distinguished and recognizable?

This raises the further question as to whether the Hereafter Life is to be lived in Space.<sup>1</sup>

The resurrection of the body in any case secures this, that each individual in the Hereafter will be able to be distinguished from the rest by means which here is secured in his possession of a physical organism, through which he functions and by means of which he makes himself known to others and is distinguished from them. So the Resurrection Body is to be a perfect organism for the use of a Spirit destined for perfection.

Eternal Form shall still divide  
Th' Eternal Soul from all beside.

*Thirdly.* If provision is thus made for our Hereafter life by the gift of a glorified body, it follows that in the mind of the Giver, God, is the thought of each one of us in the Hereafter life possessing a distinct and distinguishable Self, which will be able to express itself through, and function by means of, a spiritual body, in the same way that we are enabled here, under terrestrial conditions, to be distinguished from our fellow-mortals. *There would be no need of separate spiritual bodies for each one of us if our final end were absorption into God.*

The Christian doctrine parts company therefore with the Greek idea of the immortality of the soul only, and the Eastern dream of a Pantheistic absorption into God with the loss of personal immortality.

*Fourthly.* The Resurrection of Christ is a revelation of a Union of the Human and the Divine in His Person which continues in and through the change we call Death. We have here "the pledge of an abiding communion of a Saviour with the fullness of our nature on earth and in heaven." What

<sup>1</sup> See Streeter in *Immortality*, *ad loc.*

does this mean? Surely that the human in communion with the Divine, the Divine in union with the human, in our case as in His, survives death, and in the Hereafter is still a communion of the two, not an absorption of the one by the other. It involves the eternal character of a *relationship*. And a relationship is only possible where there are two, distinct and distinguishable.

*Fifthly.* The Incarnation and the issue in the Resurrection means that, as for the God-man, so for the man in God, the human will remain *human*. Our destiny is not to become something else. Men will not become gods. The human will become more truly human. That is to say that our communal life in the Body of Christ is to be that of men, not that of quasi-divine beings of a higher order, either here or hereafter. This secures for us the hope that much we love here in our intercourse one with another as human beings is not to be transmuted. Some have suggested that we make too much of our human ties and family bonds, thus losing sight of the wider brotherhood, and that our Lord's teaching was intended to point us to a better way. True, we are warned that in the Resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the Angels, but that does not mean the abolition, we may well believe, of all family relationships, all human ties. We are not to be bereft of father, mother, brother, sister, or related to them in some strange and unnatural way. The saints are human here and hereafter. They are our brethren, men and women. So they will be, and their communion with God will not destroy their communion one with another. The Church holds fast to the Communion of Saints as essentially a communion of human beings and believes that God will respect and hallow, not destroy, the ties which bind us one to another in Him.

## VI. THE COMMUNITY OF FINITE SPIRITS

Since God is the God of all as well as of each, the destiny of the individual is bound up with that of the whole. Hence the twofold significance of the kingdom here and hereafter



as both a personal possession—a gift to each—and a social organism—a community for all. Spiritual self-realization takes place within the Kingdom. The Christian hope is both personal and social.

“It is a feature of Christianity that it represented the human goal as at once personal and social: the realization of personal good in the Kingdom of heaven. This Kingdom, which is manifested in the world of sense and time, attains a partial realization here, and points to the world to come for its completion. The single soul attains the fulfilment of its divine end in and through the society of redeemed souls, and the social consummation becomes in its turn an end for the individual. Through this true union of individual and social good the conception of the world Beyond is set in a relation to this world which is at once intimate, vital, and ethical. In and through his temporal duties and relations man is invited to move forward to the full realization of his divine vocation as a citizen of the heavenly kingdom. The goal to which he strives is a personality completed and fulfilled, not submerged or absorbed. The ideal, though personal, is not selfish; for the good sought is at once social and personal; it is a transfigured personal life in a transfigured order.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus in the Christian view man is taught that, both in the terrestrial and in the supra-terrestrial spheres, life is found to consist of a “sum of relationships,” and the growth and development of the individual is achieved not by isolation nor in a solitary state, but in society, in full activity of life in relation to others, brethren of the one God and Father of us all.

We look for no lonely journey in the trackless paths of eternity, no isolated bliss of communion with God apart from others and devoid of human love. Our immortality is to be a social state. We are to renew friendships, form others, give and take, grow by companionship. The links which

<sup>1</sup> Professor Galloway, *Idea of Immortality*, p. 63. This book is one of the most searching and lucid contributions to the subject of Immortality, and deserves the careful study of all who are desirous of gauging the relative merits of the Christian contribution as against rival theories.

bind us here one to another are not to be severed, but renewed on a higher plane. There will thus be room for social activity. Heaven is not to be a dull monotony of static contemplation. Within the social life of the Whole, each soul will find enough outlet for the expression of its needs and activities amidst a world of kindred spirits. Social intercourse will be on a higher plane and freed from those imperfections and limitations which tend here to mar and spoil our relationships one with another. Obligations of citizenship there will be in the Heavenly Kingdom, and we are to learn here how best to reconcile the individual and the social claims, the interests of the person with the good of the State.

What ends, then, will individuals pursue? and will these ends be mutually conflicting and incompatible?

Pantheism would obliterate the individual end in a larger whole. Mere Pluralism as such would give us an infinity of ends and conflicting ideals.

"What guarantee can we have," asks Professor Ward, "on the basis of mere pluralism that the different ideals of the different centres may not prove incompatible?"

As Professor Galloway points out, "For mere plurality as such does not contain the ground of its own unity."

This of course is the old problem of the One and the Many.

The Christian contribution is to postulate, in the words of Professor Galloway, that—

"The multiplicity of finite centres forms a teleological whole of which the ultimate ground and final end is God. The coherence and unity of the many are assured when the teleological organization of the units is established by their reference to God as living ground as well as controlling principle and end. An ethical God is the security for the harmonious working out of their destinies on the part of finite individuals. Neither in Pantheism nor in Pluralism, but in genuine Theism, is the best support to the hope of human immortality."

To sum up: According to these lines of thought, we have Eternal Life as a mode of being begun here in communion

with God, growing and developing in and within the limitations of time and space, persisting through death, undergoing at death such a transformation as to constitute at once a new and glorified state of existence, yet preserving a continuity with the former state. The passage from the life under terrestrial to that under celestial conditions, from the natural to the spiritual, the temporal to the eternal, is such as to conserve and not destroy everything essential and valued in the former, yet opening out the prospect of such a transformation as to make the latter in comparison as the perfect to the imperfect, the substance to the shadow, the whole to the part.

This conservation through death pertains not to any one part of man's complex being, but to the whole man, so that he reaches the supramundane sphere not as a disembodied spirit, not unclothed, but clothed upon, the same yet changed, preserving his identity throughout, and his communion with God, in whom he is not lost, but found.

Finally, man's Eternal Life, whether here or hereafter, is essentially life in a society, a Kingdom of the Redeemed. It is no static contemplation of the Beatific Vision in a selfish exclusiveness and impassivity. It is a social life of intense activity in worship and service. It is the ideal of the family life. Exactly what forms the activity will take will depend upon a future revelation of the precise contents of the "many mansions." One thing is certain. It will not fall short of our purest and deepest expectations. It will transcend them.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT PHILOSOPHICAL SPECULATION

WE come now to the last and most difficult part of our subject, namely, to enquire whether the results we have reached in our study of the Christian contribution to the conception of Eternal Life are in accordance with the best philosophical thought of our time.

Is this insistence upon the value and persistence of human personality, together with the thought of Heaven as a society of such relatively free finite human spirits, bound together in a communal life and finding their unity and end in God—is this cycle of ideas in direct opposition to the conclusions reached in other branches of study by other lines of argument?

This raises many problems with which we cannot deal adequately, but a few general observations may be made.

(1) And first, that Christianity has to steer a middle course between a rigid Monism and a too expansive Pluralism. The problem of the relation of the One to the Many, the question of the relation of finite substances to the Absolute, the issue between a Monistic and Pluralistic theory of the universe, these are questions upon which the philosopher's camps are acutely divided. It cannot be said that the conclusions reached are decisive against the Christian postulates.

There is much in Monistic theories which favours the Eastern dream of a pantheistic absorption as the goal of the finite spirit, and little hope held out in these systems for the final persistence of individual centres of experience. There is far more room for the doctrine of personal immortality in Pluralism.

There is in our own time, however, a distinct reaction

against the philosophy of Mr. Bradley. Not the least encouraging sign from the Christian standpoint has been the appearance of some recent Gifford Lectures, notably *The Idea of God*, by Pringle-Pattison, *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, by W. R. Sorley, and *God and Personality*, by C. C. J. Webb. The importance of the position maintained by Professor Pringle-Pattison has been recognized by the Aristotelian Society, and we have had two Symposia quite lately: (1) *Life and Finite Individuality*, (2) *Individual Minds and the Mind of God*.

The strength of the arguments for the proposition that finite individuals possess a substantive and not an adjectival mode of being has been fully upheld by a series of thinkers occupying a position of great weight in philosophical circles to-day.

(2) The Christian doctrine of Personal Immortality takes sides definitely with those who reject a mere adjectival existence for human individuality, and it finds support for this in the moral argument for Theism and the tendency to emphasize the concept of value. The Christian finds cold comfort in the contention of one recent writer, that "our ideals, in so far as they are countenanced by the laws of the universe, abide and energize for ever." The belief in God's love for each individual soul, His personal interest in every single unit of finite experience, compels us to believe that in His sight every single individual life, so far as it reflects Himself in its ideals and ethical tendencies, is of infinite value. And more than this, its *values*, ethical and spiritual, have worth, not as abstractions or universalized entities divorced from finite personality, but because they are bound up with the inner life of an individual personal human being. They are *its* values, and their persistence therefore is bound up with the future of the person, as a distinct entity. "Values," in other words, "ethical" and "spiritual," are meaningless apart from and dissociated from the persons for whom they exist and whose they are.

Christianity rejects a belief in the survival value of values apart from the survival value of the personal subject in whose



inner life such values inhere as an integral part of the human personality.

Just as sin and the sinner cannot be dissociated in the eyes of God, so goodness and a good man are inseparable. If it be said that these values are not contemplated in the end as abstractions, but are inherent in the character of God and so conserved after the individual vanishes, we can only urge the contention that, so far as they have found a home within the life of any finite moral and spiritual centre of activity in a personal life, they are there in a setting which cannot be *replaced* or for which no substitute is adequate. They are *my* values as well as God's, and I demand a persistence for myself as well as for them, if they are to mean anything for me or for Him in a larger Hereafter. This demand is not mere egotism run mad, but is based upon my belief that Omnipotent Love finds in *me* something of worth. Therefore I must be *real*.

### (3) "Christ pleased not Himself."

Self-forgetfulness is the key to any higher becoming on the part of the individual. The true development from the individual to the person is along this line, the losing of one's life to find it again in a larger whole.

Thus when Christianity claims for the finite individual a *reality*, the thought is not of such a unit as an end in itself or as self-centred and unrelated. The personality is at once something in germ and something to be achieved. It is real in order to become ideal. We do not claim permanence for the self we know at any given moment, except we think of that self at its truest and its best moment, not its worst, and think of it beyond that, as capable of an infinite development towards an *ideal* revealed in the truly human personality of the God-Man. Such an ideal is God's intention for each unit, and His belief in its possibility of attainment to the goal of so high a calling is one of the secrets of the transforming power of Christianity as a creative force in the moulding and fashioning of human character. Jesus believed in men, and His unshakeable faith in the possibilities of human nature led Him to despair of none and give hope to all, even the most degraded

and imperfect of the sons of men. A philosophy which deprecates human personality and has no faith in its possibilities may find it an incredible miracle to believe that the supreme end of the Absolute is to give rise to beings such as we experience ourselves to be.<sup>1</sup> A Christian humility can appreciate the fine sense which would escape from the vivid consciousness of a personal unworthiness by seeking to take refuge in the thought that not we but our ideals will survive. Dr. Inge seems to have the same thought in mind when he says, "As we never remain the same for two days together, for which self do we desire everlasting continuance? For our last—the self with which we died? It is to be hoped not!"<sup>2</sup>

In the eyes of the Absolute—supra-personal or impersonal—we can well believe that the unfinished but developing personality of a finite individual would have no intrinsic worth, but in the eyes of a Personal God of Love not even the meanest of His creatures is devoid of some spark of good and some reflection of the Divine Image, however faint. And He judges of our abiding worth, not by what we are, but by what we shall be and what He believes He can yet make us.

All I could never be,  
All men ignored in me,  
*This* I was worth to God.

Christianity thus, when faced by the problem of the One and the Many, the Relative and the Absolute, lifts the whole problem into the realm of Spirit and deals with ethical and spiritual values as these are centred in finite human personalities in relationship to a Personal God.

(4) What we must contend for is the existence of a distinct Christian philosophy in rivalry, if you will, to other systems, and one which must stand or fall on its own merits and its own intrinsic worth as the best solution of the problems which beset human thought.

In claiming for Christianity a distinctive philosophy, we

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Professor Bosanquet, *Life and Finite Individuality*, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> *Aristotelian Soc. Papers*, vol. xix, p. 284.

hold that we have a perfect right to make use of our own terms and phraseology, and to refuse to express or attempt to express our thought in terms borrowed from rival systems and inadequate, as we think, to express the richness of content we claim to possess in our concepts.

Thus we reject the "Absolute" of philosophy, the adjectival and the relative, and substitute our own terms, the Personal God of religion and the finite human personality of religious experience.<sup>1</sup>

(5) What are the postulates for such a Christian philosophy? The time is surely overdue for a clear statement of what are essential data for the defence of the distinctively Christian truths as against rival theories and systems. We may venture to outline one or two bearing more directly upon our subject—the question of human personality and its survival value, its personal immortality; the Kingdom of Heaven as a Realm of Ends or a Monadology and the Nature of God as Ultimate Reality.

Christianity is given as Revelation and in terms which are concrete, definite, and personal. Its interests are primarily practical. At first sight, therefore, it does not appear before us as a philosophical system, and its Founder did not speak to the men of His day in terms of the current philosophies of the Schools. None the less what He said and did, however unsystematic His teaching, if we care to scrutinize it and to develop its implications, does lead to a distinctive position and attitude in regard to the chief philosophical questions of that or any subsequent age.

What that position is may best be appreciated if we represent it as neither a thoroughgoing Monism nor a clear-cut Pluralism, but as having points of contact with both and yet

<sup>1</sup> As Balfour has pointed out (in *Theism and Humanism*), the religious man understands God as "something more than an identity wherein all differences vanish, or a Unity which includes but does not transcend the differences which somehow it holds in solution . . . a God whom men can love, to whom men can pray, who takes sides, who has purposes and preferences, whose attributes, however conceived, leave unimpaired the possibility of a personal relation between Himself and those whom He has created."

distinct and distinguishable from either. The Christian philosopher, e.g., will be bound by neither the rigid Monism of Spinoza nor the more hopeful "Monadology" of Leibniz.

A full acceptance of its terms will lead to a position which, however unstable, is a *via media* between the two.

(6) We have as Christian philosophical postulates :

(a) *God* ; as Personal Holy Love.

A Trinity in Unity and a Unity in Trinity. A community, not a barren unit, is the ultimate Reality.

(b) *Man* ; human personality as a centre of ethical and spiritual activity is ultimately not adjectival nor a part of appearance, but *real*.

(c) There is a relation between God and Man which, whilst not identity of Essence, postulates such an affinity as to render communion between the two the consummation of man's truest and deepest being. There can be no question of ethical relations with the Absolute. If we think of ourselves as parts of a Whole, we are thinking not of an ethical relationship between God and ourselves, but of an ontological identity which is pure Pantheism.

The Relation is that which subsists between a Creator, a Personal Holy Loving God, and Man, God's Creation in love.

(d) Communion with God does not mean identification. A creative act confers a relative independence. We are not phases of the Divine Life. God is the Ground of finite spirits, but is not one Eternal Self in which they are contained, although He conditions their existence.

We reject McTaggart's thought of the Absolute eternally differentiating itself in finite centres as subversive of the Christian doctrine of the Divine Transcendence. God Himself is not part of His Creation. If "the Eternal Whole is the ultimate Reality and satisfaction of finite selves," this does not mean for the Christian an ultimate absorption. If "the truth of the finite is to be taken up into the infinite," this for the Christian means the preservation of his personality in a relationship with the Infinite such as is involved in God's creative act.

We safeguard the Christian doctrine from all pantheistic systems by holding as equally vital truths the Divine Immanence and the Divine Transcendence. We cannot get outside of God, but He can get outside of us, and be outside the range of our finite experience. He must be first outside of us if we are to speak of Him as in any sense immanent in us. Transcendence and Immanence are correlative terms.

Our life in Him is capable of infinite development in fellowship, but His Transcendence secures our individuality inasmuch as He can never as "Deus Immanens" be mistaken for a part of His creation or identified in any ontological sense with it. "There is an immanence of the Divine in the human, which, though it eludes definition, is not identification." It is doubtful whether philosophy can ever take us beyond the thought of the Immanent God. Religious experience, however, holds within it a key which eludes philosophy as such.

(e) There is a real and *eternal* distinction between the Creator and the creature, a distinction which Christianity is concerned to preserve at all costs, whilst not pronouncing it absolute or of such a kind as to preclude relationship as against Deism.

This difference, moreover, is not one of *degree* only, but of *kind*. We reject the thought that man partakes of the Divine Essence to a degree and in the end becomes Divine at the cost of the loss of his distinct individuality as a centre of activity over against God.

Professor Bosanquet assures us that "the finite self, like everything else in the Universe, is now and here beyond escape an element in the Absolute."

There is a truth in this. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." We cannot get outside God. But the Christian still uses the personal pronoun distinguishing self from God. "In Him *we* live." In this he parts company with Dr. Bosanquet.

The Christian, moreover, escapes the opposite error of Pluralism, which would regard each self as an exclusive entity, a windowless Monad. The Kingdom of God in such a system might well be a community of conflicting and mutually



antagonistic ends, a wilderness of self-subsisting centres of activity in no sense organically but merely externally connected.

(f) Religion demands (1) full reality, Transcendence and Immanence for God with a difference in *kind* between Himself as Creator and His Creation. (2) Quasi-reality, a relative independence conferred by the Divine Creator upon the human creature, with a consequent relationship between God and man, conferring upon the latter an eternal, permanent, yet derived existence which finds its truth not in identity of being, but in affinity, kinship.

We claim for God a transcendence to which man can never attain, a totality of Being which, whilst it includes the totality of finite human spirits, is not that totality or limited by it.

The religious postulates are Transcendence and Immanence, and with these terms rather than with the philosophical concepts of Absolute and Relative, Appearance and Reality, the Christian strives to do justice to a religious revelation and experience which is found to work and survives a pragmatic test within the realm of personality, human and Divine, and the experienced relationship between the two which constitutes eternal life in Time, with the promise of a fuller experience of the same in life at a higher level and under conditions of the exact nature of which we are ignorant, but which will not be so wholly unlike what we know here as to constitute a new mode of being in a new relationship to God.

In this relationship each human personality is a separately existing but depending entity, real so far as it goes and ever becoming more real as the result of its life lived in communion with God. The act of creation secures for man a quasi-independence, an existence in its own right over against the Creator, and yet not absolutely so inasmuch as it is a conferred, derived, dependent, and related, but none the less real and lasting existence.

Test this in the realm of the religious consciousness of the soul's communion with God. Man finds that in moments of

deepest and most vital real and intimate communion with God he is not less but more himself. There is no annihilation, absorption, or obsession of the human by the Divine, but the expansion, elevation, purification, of the former by the latter. The soul experiences the full realization of itself as the result of its intensest communion with Another. In the life hid with Christ in God, the finite finds the truth of its existence in the Infinite, but is not absorbed in the discovery. It retains its consciousness of the relationship, its awareness of its state, and its more intimate union with the Divine is its discovery of its own intrinsic worth in the eyes of Love Himself, who discovers in it something worthy of His regard.<sup>1</sup>

This human personality, however, grows as the result of a life lived within a community and within, therefore, a network of relationships formed with other finite personalities, constituting and conditioning its own development. We attain to the higher levels of the truly personal life only *within* and not outside the City of God. Our future destiny and End, therefore, is bound up with that of the Whole.

(g) The final End, when the Son Himself also shall be subject to Him that did put all things under Him, that God may be all in all, is not the suppression of all the partially reals by their becoming one with the Whole, but a totality within a totality—a community of finite human spirits created for communion with God and finding the consummation of their being in a social life of infinitely varied relationships within a supreme relationship, soul with soul, soul with God.

Hence the thought of Creation and the concept of the final End are intimately and profoundly connected. God is revealed as the great Giver. From eternity to eternity He imparts Himself that others may live. Their end also is achieved by giving. They lose themselves in an act of supreme self-negation, the impulse in them of the same Divine Life with its imperious demand for self-donation. This loss of

<sup>1</sup> On the relation of the Human and the Divine in the Person of Christ and in us, reference may be made to *A Study in Christology*, Part II, where these points are substantiated.

self is not annihilation, but the rediscovery of the life at a higher level—the principle of dying to live is ceaselessly manifested within the Divine Community, and this because its source is God Himself.

Thus we want to borrow from Bergson an illustration in order to refute its *pantheistic* implications and adapt it to a higher use.

“When a strong instinct assures the probability of personal survival,” says Bergson,<sup>1</sup> “they are right not to close their ears to its voice; but if there exist ‘souls’ capable of an independent life, whence do they come? When, how, and why do they enter into this body which we see arise, quite naturally, from a mixed cell derived from the bodies of its two parents? All these questions will remain unanswered, a philosophy of intuition will be a negation of science, will be sooner or later swept away by science, if it does not resolve to see the life of the body just where it really is, on the road that leads to the life of the spirit. But it will then no longer have to do with definite living beings. Life as a whole, from the initial impulsion that thrust it into the world, will appear as a wave which rises, and which is opposed by the descending movement of matter. On the greater part of its surface, at different heights, the current is converted by matter into a vortex. At one point alone it passes freely, dragging with it the obstacle which will weigh on its progress but will not stop it. At this point is humanity; it is our privileged situation. On the other hand, this rising wave is consciousness . . . the matter that it bears along with it, and in the interstices of which it inserts itself, alone can divide it into distinct individualities. On flows the current, running through human generations, subdividing itself into individuals. This subdivision was vaguely indicated in it, but could not have been made clear without matter. Thus souls are continually being created, which, nevertheless, in a certain sense pre-existed. They are nothing else than the little rills into which the great river of life divides itself, flowing through the body of humanity. . . .

“All the living hold together, and all yield to the same tremendous push. The animal takes its stand on the plant, man bestrides animality, and the whole of humanity, in

<sup>1</sup> *Creative Evolution*, p. 283 ff.

space and in time, is one immense army galloping beside and before and behind each of us in an overwhelming charge able to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable obstacles, perhaps even death."

It would be difficult, perhaps, to select a better passage than this summing-up, in Bergson's words, of the meaning of Evolution, to illustrate by contrast the distinctive teaching of Christianity.

In this passage we have an echo of the Greek contempt for matter, the thought of the body being carried by the soul as a weighty encumbrance, the suggestion of pre-existence, the suggestion of Life as the great Reality, and this, under the figure of a mighty river, implying impersonality for the Whole, even though individual souls exhibit for a time a higher reality in conscious life. None the less the clear implication is that we sink back into this river of life and are lost as the mist from the sea. There is the denial of personal immortality and the perdurance of finite individuality. We have the picture of Reality as a blind impersonal wave of life pushing on to no clearly defined goal, overcoming obstacles in a mad charge, seemingly for no ethical or spiritual end, but as the result of an inexplicable "initial impulsion" coming from nowhere and leading no whither. If it succeeds in overwhelming death itself, we may well ask—to what purpose? On flows the current, but we shall not be conscious of the fact, nor will the river of life itself be aware of the victory it has won.

No, our Christian thought is on a higher level than this. The Divine Love of a Personal God is the motive of the "initial impulsion." Life indeed is the great Reality, but it is God's Life and it is poured forth in a mighty wave as the instinctive expression of Love's nature to give itself, to sacrifice itself in creative activity. There are degrees of Reality. The life imparted to the vegetable and animal kingdoms is of one degree, the life which man is capable of receiving is life on a higher level. God is the source of all life, but to man alone, as a finite centre of free ethical and spiritual activity, has been granted the privilege of tasting

of God's Life in a fuller degree and on a higher plane. The purpose of Divine Love has been to pour forth Himself as a mighty wave into the sum of finite existence created by Himself to reflect, in varying degree, His perfection. In and through finite human personality, God has striven and still is striving to reflect His Glory. Souls are created for a purpose—to share God's Life—and so far as they are willing to do this—to make a free response to His Divine Love—they become finite centres of creative activity, seen in the world as lights reflecting the Glory of God and finding the truth and perfection of their being in an active fellowship one with another in Him who is their Life and their Light. Their end is not to be extinguished as their beginning was not without purpose. They are necessary to the fullness of God's Self-expression.<sup>1</sup> More and more adequately does He find expression in them so far as they are surrendered lives, able thus to be fashioned anew by Him after the Divine Image. Inasmuch, however, as no single finite human personality can ever fully reveal God, there is the necessity for an infinite variety of finite spirits, a community, a commonwealth, if justice is to be done to Love's desire to reproduce Himself. The Divine Life will find, if not full, at least adequate expression within this community of spirits—each individual spirit reflecting from its particular angle one ray of the Divine Glory, no two centres reflecting in identically the same way the same Glory—hence the whole Glory never fully seen in any one reflection but needing the whole for its adequate expression. Hence also each individual soul has its contribution to make to the great task set before us, which is the purpose of our being—to satisfy God's desire to see Himself. Even the meanest amongst the sons of men has a contribution to make, and this contribution is not something external to himself but is himself—not as he is, but as he is capable of becoming, not his false self marred by sin, but his true self redeemed by his Saviour.

Shall God find in a redeemed humanity—a universe of souls—an adequate expression of Himself? The answer is that

<sup>1</sup> Cf., however, pp. 80-1 for the sense in which this holds good.



His full Glory must ever transcend the creature's fullest capacity to reflect Him, but that within the limits of the human, God is striving to this end, that He may yet see in us such a reflection of Himself as shall satisfy Love's desire to create, to produce. Surely this is to postulate a goal and end for redeemed humanity worthy of the Divine Love. If this is His Eternal Purpose for you and for me it gives a dignity to our human nature, a purpose to our life, a meaning to all those strivings and strugglings after a higher becoming which we know too well in the conflict we wage against sin, the world, and the devil. We have the assurance that in every effort we make to struggle up to the higher levels of life and to overcome the evil in us, we have God on our side not as Omnipotent Passivity but as Dynamic Activity, the activity of a tireless, patient, Creative Love, content to suffer, to agonize, to travail in us and with us, if only in the end it may make of us really what it discerns in us ideally, viz. a new creature. Death cannot frustrate, so we dare to believe, such a Divine purpose as this. Love triumphant is God's last word, Life Everlasting His final End for Man. The "initial impulsion" is for the Christian no blind force on a purposeless errand, be it constructive or destructive. There was and is a Person behind it, and Love was and is His motive. Some day, then, we shall see the End, and Faith is strong to say this much: "When I wake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it." Then indeed will our Divine Creator survey again His Work made and remade, created and redeemed, and behold! it shall be very good. Toward that consummation Christianity bids us move. For its achievement God bids us work. Fellow-labourers with Him, we have the assurance that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Finally, if we seek by intellect alone to gauge the certainty of a life hereafter, the quest halts at a bare probability. We must wait and see.

Bergson and Croce, however, have taught us the illegitimacy of exalting the logical judgment into an absolute criterion whilst we possess two other criteria—the æsthetic and the moral—both of which have equally valid claims and are not

merely subjective and relative. Reality can only be known by an activity of our whole personality which is not the exclusive exercise of any one faculty. Moreover, it expresses itself in an act which is essentially living experience, not reflection upon it.<sup>1</sup>

We have within us another criterion of judgment other than the logical. Whilst intellect halts on the brink of uncertainty, instinct leaps to the truth and human love answers with an eternal "Yea" the everlasting "No" of our fears and doubts.

Let me quote two short poems taken from a helpful volume by W. Robertson Nicoll on *Reunion in Eternity*. The first gives us the intellectual doubt and ends with the "wait-and-see" policy of rational activity; the second lifts the subject into the realm of personal relationship and love's instinct which o'erleaps the barriers of cold logic and learns the truth by living it.

I cannot know ; there is no man who knows.  
 We are, and we are not,—and that is all  
 The knowledge which to any may befall ;  
 We know not life's beginning, nor life's close,—  
 'Twixt dawn and twilight shine the sunny hours  
 Wherein some hands pluck thorns and some hands flowers ;  
 'Twixt light and shade are shed the sudden showers ;  
 Yet night shall cover earth as with a pall.

Alas, poor song, all singing is in vain ;  
 What thing more sad is left for thee to say ?  
 Oh, weary time of life, and weary way,  
 Can dead souls rise, or lost joys live again ?  
 Now by the hand of sorrow are we led ;  
 Though sweet things come, they come as joys born dead :  
 Let us arise, go hence, for all is said,  
 And we must bide the breaking of the day.

(P. B. Marston, from his poem *In Grief*.)

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 174. "The intellect is characterized by a natural inability to comprehend life. Instinct, on the contrary, is moulded on the very form of life. While intelligence treats everything mechanically, instinct proceeds, so to speak, organically."

So far the intellectual verdict.

The second is taken from *Ion*, Act V, scene 2 (T. N. Talfourd).

Clemanthe asks Ion, on verge of his death :—

“ And shall we never see each other ? ”

Ion replies, after a pause :

“ Yes !

I have ask'd that dreadful question of the hills  
That look eternal ; of the flowing streams  
That lucid flow for ever ; of the stars,  
Amid whose fields of azure my raised spirit  
Hath trod in glory : All were dumb, but now  
While I thus gaze upon thy living face,  
I feel the love that kindles through its beauty  
Can never wholly perish ; we *shall* meet  
Again, Clemanthe ! ”

This is Love's verdict, and the truth of it is confirmed by another Scene in a Garden twenty centuries ago when a familiar voice that was still spake again : “ Mary ! ” . . .  
“ Rabboni ! Master ! ”

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF GOD

#### INTRODUCTION

THE failure in certain tendencies of modern philosophical thought to take Theism seriously has led me to claim that the time is overdue for a clear statement of the fundamental postulates of a Christian Philosophy which must stand or fall on its own merits—in rivalry, if you will, with other philosophical systems—as the best explanation of the many problems which confront us when we come to reflect upon the meaning of Reality and seek to reach a comprehensive view of God and His relationship to the world.

In an illuminating discussion on the relation between Philosophy and Theology, Dr. Rashdall<sup>1</sup> pointed out that there can only be one science of God, and that this science must rest upon the conclusions which human reason bases upon a survey of the whole of human experience, especially, of course, religious and moral experience. Now, in our view, it is precisely the failure in certain quarters to do justice to the *whole* of human experience, not least religious experience, that accounts for the wide divergence between the philosophical and the theological conceptions of God. And so long as this continues we must acquiesce in a fact which Dr. Rashdall deplored—viz. the existence of “one science of God in the philosophical faculty and another science of God—whether regarded as an inferior or as a superior branch

<sup>1</sup> “The Relation between Philosophy and Theology,” *Theology*, October 1920, p. 198.

of science—in the faculty of theology.” Such is the state of affairs which exists to-day. We can only enter our protest, and this takes the form of an attempt to indicate, and in some measure to defend, what are, in our view, the essential postulates of a Christian Philosophy.

If the question be asked, Is there any distinctive Christian Philosophy? the answer is that there must be so long as Philosophy fails to do justice to the distinctive contribution Christianity has to make. No theory, for example, of the “teleological status of finite spirits in the universe” can be, in our view, adequate which fails to take account of the Christian teaching concerning Personality, Human and Divine, and no world-view can be satisfactory which ignores the distinctive contribution to the conception of God which is reached through Hebrew ethical Monotheism and its culmination in the Incarnation. Again, any philosophical system which ignores Revelation must appear defective from the point of view of the Christian thinker, who is bound to consider the contribution it makes towards the solution of his problems.

What is needed to-day is a modern School of Alexandria to commend Christianity to this age and to indicate the significance of the Christian Creed in relationship to modern philosophical speculation. The real danger to Christianity lies not in any results hitherto reached or yet to be arrived at by scientific investigation. Science, once it passes from its descriptive function to any attempt at explanation, becomes in some sense a philosophy. Hence the strongest arguments against Christianity come, not from the scientific investigator, but from the speculative philosopher. It is because certain tendencies in modern philosophical speculation are fundamentally subversive of much which the Christian holds dear and clings to in his religious experience that we venture to embark upon the bold course of a clear statement as to the essentials of our faith in relationship to modern philosophical thought.

A Christian Philosophy has existed since the earliest days of the Christian Church.



The meeting-point of Greek metaphysics and Hebrew-Christian religion is the Logos doctrine which the writer of the Fourth Gospel adopted from a range of thought represented by the concept of "Mediation" and expressed in varied form either as the Platonic Ideas, the Stoic Logoi, the Aristotelian forms, the Angelology of later Judaism, the doctrine of the Memra, the Wisdom of the Hokmah literature, the Æons of Valentinus, the Logos of Philo, or his *δυνάμεις* (powers).

This range of ideas centres in the philosophical problem of the relation between God and the world, the attempt to bridge the gulf between being and becoming, the problem of the relation between the absolute and the relative, the finite and the infinite, the conditional and the unconditional, the contingent and the permanent. "It is the problem of relating the contingent, the casual, what seems to us in darker moments the wasteful and tragic, to some abiding principle, to discern 'at its silent work in human affairs a power, self-consciously eternal, actively communicating its own scope to the feeble deeds, the painful acquirements, the values, the loves and hopes of men.'"<sup>1</sup>

The Logos-Christology has played an important part in the history of the relationship between philosophy and religion. The term "Logos" undergoes two startling transformations when it passes from Greek philosophy or Hebrew usage into the full circle of Christian teaching. The author of the Fourth Gospel makes two affirmations: 1. The Word was with God—i.e. in *personal* communion with God. 2. The Word was made flesh—i.e. became incarnate.

Greek philosophy, working within the limited range of an intellectual metaphysic, could not have reached to the height of the sublimity of either of these two statements, and, in fact, would have denounced both as derogatory to the Divine Nature.

Thus, to use Illingworth's <sup>2</sup> words:

"St. John presents Christianity—when the time for such

<sup>1</sup> W. R. Thomson, *Christian Idea of God*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Reason and Revelation*, p. 58.

a presentation comes—as containing a message for the intellect, as well as for the heart. The Divine Reason or Word became man—and suffering man—out of love for humanity, and in so doing had manifested God as essentially Love, and love as the final cause, or the ultimate reality of the universe. . . .

“God had revealed Himself in the region of experience, and had promised that His Spirit should instruct men, as they were able to bear it, in the fuller significance of that revelation. . . .

Once grant the validity of revelation, and it is obvious, as Illingworth says, that the Christian possesses a world-view which is governed by the Incarnation.

“The Incarnation reorientated the philosophy of Christian thinkers; much as in later days the Copernican astronomy reorientated our views of the physical universe, and with equal legitimacy in either case. But at the same time this new piece of experience does not admit of demonstration: its acceptance as a fact is a matter of personal predisposition; and it can only of course have the force of a fact for those who so accept it. . . .

“Hence Christianity effected a cleavage in philosophy no less than in all other departments of life; a cleavage between the Christian and all other thinkers. For no Christian could hold his religion and his philosophy apart, since his religion involved facts which vitally affected his philosophy. And thenceforward, if he philosophized at all, he must be a Christian philosopher. He must view the universe in that new light which the Incarnation had cast upon its meaning. He must incorporate in his philosophy truth which the un-Christian thinker did not accept.”

If this contention of Dr. Illingworth's be conceded, it follows that Christianity has a distinctive contribution to make to philosophy, and that it is to this source that philosophers must go for the light they are seeking in the problem of the relation between God and the world, the meaning and value of human personality, the question of personal immortality—in short, all those vital points upon which men are seeking for light and upon which the verdict of so many modern philosophers is hesitating and unsatisfactory. Revelation throws

an illumination so rich in its significance that we cannot afford to ignore it, apart from any question as to its origin.

Whatever view we may take as to the place of revelation in a philosophical system, we must admit that Christianity does contain a world-view so helpful in the light it throws upon the chief philosophical problems of our time that it is irrational in the extreme to dismiss it or rule it out of court. We have to reckon with it whether we like it or not, and the contribution it makes to the solution of our difficulties is so great as to suggest that it may be true. Its intrinsic worth is our apology for pressing its claim to a fair hearing. Its reasonableness should commend it to all save the prejudiced. If the reader of modern philosophical works in England is bewildered by the chorus of conflicting voices and the mutually incompatible solutions of individual writers, he may well turn once again to Christianity and examine its claims to a hearing.

### THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTIONS OF GOD

It is clear, I think, that any system of thought, whether philosophical or theological, must aim at an ultimate unity of all existence. The ultimate Reality, the "Absolute" of philosophical speculation, or the God of religion, must be a unit or a unity, not a plurality as such. This is not to beg the question of the One and the Many, or to decide dogmatically in favour of a Monistic as against a Pluralistic system. All we are contending for at the moment is the verdict of human reason, which through much tribulation has reached the conclusion that God, if there be a God, must be conceived of as a single ultimate Reality. Philosophy and Theology are at one in postulating the concept of One Being as "the indispensable presupposition of all intelligibility in finite things" (Lotze). We cannot acquiesce in Polytheism as a final stage in human thought, and all Pluralistic systems which, from a *prima facie* view of the world, conclude that Reality may exist in distributive form "in the shape not of an all but of a set of eaches" (as James puts it) must, in facing the problem thus raised of

the Many in relation to the One, seek to unify the Reality thus discovered. If Pluralism is content to acquiesce in a failure to discover this unity, it must stand self-condemned as a tentative system, a halt in the progress of human thought towards a thoroughly rational explanation. The next step logically for Pluralism is some form of Theism. The ultimate Reality is either the "Absolute" of rationalistic Logic or the Personal God of ethical Monotheism. Excluding frankly materialistic systems, the real rivals are a spiritualistic Monism or an ethical Theism. A pluralistic metaphysic is a half-way house with which we are only indirectly concerned in this enquiry. The real point at issue is to decide whether and in what sense the "Absolute" of philosophical rationalism can be identified with the God of religion, and if not, why not?

The contrast between the Personal God of Christian worship and the Impersonal Absolute of mystic contemplation brings out the fundamental divergence between the two concepts of God reached by way of religious experience and philosophical intellectualism. The one is the culmination of Hebrew ethical Monotheism as this is crowned by the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation; the other is the result of a dialectical process which gives us the Absolute, the unrelated impersonal Being, as the sole reality. In the Christian doctrine we have the triumph of anthropomorphism and its vindication in a revelation of God in terms of human life. In the philosophical concept we have the triumph of a speculative creed which offers us what is an "ante-Christian conception of God" (Dorner), "an inaccessible unity beyond human thought or speech" (Bussell).

The influence of this speculative mysticism on Christian thought is strikingly shown in Alexandrian theology. The doctrine of God—e.g. in Clement of Alexandria—would have been impossible without the influence of Greek thought on Christian theology.

The following summary of Dr. Tollinton's treatment of the doctrine of God in Clement of Alexandria will illustrate the point. The true being of God must be depicted in negative

terminology: all qualities and attributes connecting Him with human finitude or cosmic process must be thought away.

"In the divine nature there is neither change, nor movement, nor need, nor passion. God is above all the limitations of time and space; above all that is the property of the things which come and go. He has no shape, no visible nature, no name, no beginning. He is above Creation and all its wonderful order. From the human standpoint he is unapproachable, and the more we follow after him the further he recedes from our grasp and our ken. When we have said all that we can about him, his true being and nature remain, as ever, unexpressed. . . He is neither genus, nor difference, nor species, nor individual, nor number, nor an event, nor that to which an event happens, nor could one rightly say he was the Universe or the Whole. It is true we give him names, calling him the Good, or Intelligence, or the Reality, or Father, or God, or Creator, or Lord; but all such terms are not properly the names of God, but just the best we can employ in our difficulties, so that our thoughts may have some ground of terminology on which to rest.

"In thinking of him we mentally remove all the physical qualities of body from his being. The three dimensions, length, breadth, and height, do not apply. A point or Monad in a certain position alone remains. If from this conception the last element of spaciality, definite position, is removed, the pure Monad, or Unity, is all our thought retains. Yet even here, it seems, this process of abstraction does not stop. Elsewhere Clement says that God is One, and even above Unity, and beyond the very Monad. The only statement we can still make respecting him is that he exists, he is."

Starting thus with a conception of God as a pure negation, Clement is hard put to it to show how this Transcendent One can ever come into contact with the world or be related to the finite human spirit. He accomplishes the task of incorporating this philosophical concept of the Absolute into Christian theology by means of the Logos-Christology. His position is that, whilst we cannot express the Essence of the Unknowable as He is in Himself, we can say something of His works and power. "God is ontologically remote, dynamically near."



We are not now concerned to trace in detail the interesting way in which the great Alexandrian Father worked out this pregnant thought. We are concerned, however, to notice the influence of Greek speculation on the formation of his doctrine of God. We readily recognize the point of contact between Plato and Moses in the assertion that what we can say about God is that He exists, He is. We are reminded of the great Hebrew affirmation, "I am that I am." We can accept the fact that there is room in all our thought of God for a reverent Christian Agnosticism. There must be heights and depths in the Being of God which must ever pass our finite powers of apprehension. He is in some sense beyond all speech, all knowledge. "No man hath seen God at any time."

The value of such a conception lies in its insistence upon the Divine Transcendence. We need to be on our guard against the errors of a crude anthropomorphism, and to be reminded that "God transcends our highest thoughts about Him, and that the most learned and even the most spiritual of us must worship in some sense at the shrine of the Unknown."

This is the truth in the concept of Divine Transcendence, but it will remain a misleading half-truth, injurious to the religious life, if it is not followed by the equally vital concept of the Divine Immanence. The God who is ontologically remote is dynamically near: the One whose face no man hath seen has been revealed in terms of human life. What speculative Philosophy would seem to deny, Theology affirms—viz. that He who inhabits eternity and dwells in the high and holy place dwells also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit.

In ancient times it was the work of philosophical theologians to substitute this highly abstract, depotentiated Deity in the place of the cruder, not to say warmer and more human, conceptions of God which meet us in Old Testament theology. Men like Philo strove to rid their religious beliefs of crude anthropomorphic elements in the effort to commend the God of religion to the philosophical world of their day—to wed Judaism and Hellenism by the sacrifice of what they had come to regard as popular images in the minds of the

unreflecting and ignorant of a Reality which in the last analysis was incapable of finite apprehension or earthly representation.

But such attempts, however well-meaning, have their dangers, and tend to obscure real and crucial differences. The question is whether the Christian conception of God can ever come to terms with rival conceptions without losing what is its distinct and essential content. Can the highly abstract, transcendental teaching of Plato, Philo, and Aristotle ever be comfortably housed in Christian theology?

Many would say that the Christian teaching is the result of a synthetic activity—that we have, as matter of fact, already incorporated Neo-Platonic, Stoic, and Aristotelian elements into Hebrew ethical Monotheism, and the result is Catholic Christianity. Others would point to the influence of philosophical speculation as a distinct impediment to the true conception of God which Christianity contains, and would show that, whereas Greek thought reaches a static concept of Deity as the result of its search after redemption through knowledge, Hebrew and Christian teaching reveals God as essentially active: we have a dynamic concept of Deity and redemption through sacrifice.

Is there a radical divergence between these two concepts, and is Christianity irrevocably committed to the one as against the other?

I do not think, myself, that the antithesis is a final one. It is rather a question of emphasis. Whilst the Hebrew and the Christian concept does undoubtedly stress the dynamic element in the Deity, and in its category of Personality as applied to God seeks to emphasize the reality of the Divine Will, God as Creative Activity, God as Creator and Preserver, in relationship to finite spirits, none the less there is ample room in Christian theology for the concept of God as the Unchanging Permanent Reality—the Abiding One, the I AM THAT I AM.

We should contend that the Christian conception, far from being an inherently contradictory one, is in fact the only view which does justice to the elements of truth concerning the Nature of the Godhead and the relationship between God and

man which are suggested in the development of thought in Greek and Hebrew history ; further, that whilst the Greek conception strove to do justice to intellectual and rational interests, it failed to answer to the moral and religious needs of men. On the other hand, Hebrew ethical Monotheism, whilst it did full justice to the demands of the moral and spiritual nature, hardly satisfied the intellectual and æsthetic in man's many-sided and complex personality. Christianity is in one sense the culmination of Hebrew ethical Monotheism ; in another sense it is something infinitely more. It embraces in its conception of God the truth after which both Hebrew and Greek sought. It gives us both a static and a dynamic concept, and it thus satisfies both Philosophy and Theology.

This is a very bold claim to make and difficult to substantiate. I believe, however, that a careful analysis of the distinctive Christian postulates, especially the doctrine of the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity, the concept of Perfect Personality, the concept of God as Personal Holy Love, and, not least, an investigation into the precise meaning of the correlative terms Transcendence and Immanence as applied to God in relation to the world—these postulates will yield a view of God satisfactory at once to all the demands of our complex personality, and therefore adequate to satisfy Philosophy and Theology—man in his intellectual and in his devotional activities.

I cannot refrain from quoting in this connexion a suggestive passage from Dr. Tollinton's great work on Clement of Alexandria to which I have already referred :

" Man," he writes, " interprets God in terms of his own nature, and side by side with Intelligence are the other forces of Emotion and of Will. If Intelligence predominated with the Greek, Will or Power were supreme with the Hebrew ; Emotion, Feeling, Love, with the Mystic and the Saint. The character of any theology depends on the proportion in which these factors are discovered in the Divine Nature. The Greek saw Reason as primary in the Godhead ; Christian thought, when Hellenic influence has not been supreme, has insisted rather upon the Power and the Love of God, according as it has taken its tone from the Old or the New Testament.

These three principles, which are fundamental in man's spiritual nature, and therefore in theology, may be discerned at work in the variations of later religious teaching. . . . Fundamentally," he adds, "the Logos is the Thought of God. Is it because Intelligence is neither the primary need nor the highest activity of our human nature that Religion has commonly chosen rather to discern in the Divine Being, as its chief characteristics, the other elements of Power and Love?"

This is a most suggestive passage, and it reminds us that possibly the reason why we have to acquiesce in a conflict at present between Religion and Philosophy on the question of the conception of God is simply the fact to which Professor James has drawn attention—viz. the exclusive regard paid to the results of logical dialectic. This "vice of intellectualism" has, we suggest, wrought disastrous results in the whole philosophical outlook as to the nature and character of the Absolute. Hence our growing conviction that "religious intellectualism is incapable of meeting all the spiritual needs of human nature," and that so long as Philosophy is content to ignore or to disparage the data of religious experience, so long will it fail to win the allegiance of any save an intellectual aristocracy analogous to the circles for which the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies were avowedly designed, and so long must Theology continue to offer its protest in the interest of the needs of the whole of human nature, including our moral and religious life.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is significant in this connexion to remember a fact to which Dr. Illingworth draws attention—viz. that four great modern philosophers have each of them emphasized an important element in the religious consciousness: Kant, the will, in the moral judgment, the categorical imperative; Hegel, the reason, claiming, as against Kant's distinction between appearance and reality, that "the rational is the real," and, further, the essential kinship between the human and the Divine reason which leaves room for the conception of personality, human and Divine, as separate but kindred reals. It is true that in the issue Hegelianism developed along one line, by the identification of the human and the Divine, the idea of God becoming conscious of Himself through the mind of man, with its issue in Pantheism. Schleiermacher, however, appealed to the verdict of religious experience, and claimed to find in feeling, as against will and reason, the central essence of

The outstanding task of a Christian Philosophy is to justify the concept of God as spiritual Personality, and with this the reality and value of finite human personality in relationship to God as Creator and Redeemer.

A doctrine of absolute transcendence is fatal to these positions, and represents the extreme limit of what has been termed the "negative theology."

The doctrine of complete transcendence appears in the contrast between the Aristotelian and the Stoic philosophy. Aristotle maintained the complete separation of God from the world, the Stoics upheld His essential immanence in the world. The problem for Aristotle was thus the difficulty of connecting the unmoved Mover with that which is moved. The problem for the Stoic was to preserve the distinction between God and the world. In Theology the one problem appears as Deism, the other as Pantheism. In Philosophy the root difficulty is that of Being and Becoming, the relationship between the One and the Many.

Now, it is this over-emphasis upon transcendence which gives us the metaphysical Absolute and the negative theology of Neo-Platonism. The more the transcendence was emphasized, the more God was removed from the world, above Matter, Mind, or Spirit, as by the Neo-Pythagoreans, and the more we find the tendency to conceive of Him as completely devoid of all qualities. God is *ἄποιος*, as Philo says, "devoid of qualities." "No name names Him." As Windelband has pointed out, in Plotinus "the Deity is the absolutely transcendent primordial being exalted as a perfect unity above mind, which, as the principle that contains plurality

religion, arguing from the sense of dependence; and in this he was followed by Herrmann, *Communion with God*, in which we find the all-important element of religious emotion, feeling in the deepest ranges of the religious life, as giving us the firmest grasp of reality as against the moral or the intellectual activity. Lastly came Lotze, with his insistence upon the verdict of the whole complex personality in its many-sided activity, including all three elements, will, reason, and feeling, which cannot be isolated, but are known to us only as they find expression in a personality in which they are united and harmonized (see Illingworth, *Reason and Revelation*, ch. ii, *passim*).



already in its unity, must have proceeded forth from God (and not have been eternal)." "This One, τὸ ἓν, precedes all thought and being; it is infinite, formless, and 'beyond' (ἐπέκεινα) the intellectual as well as the sensuous world, and therefore without consciousness and without activity." Hence, as Windelband goes on to show, we can readily understand the tendency in Neo-Platonic thought to mysticism. If we are to come into touch with a Being of this kind, above any of our human faculties, it is by the *via negativa* that we must advance in the effort to reach "a state of ecstasy devoid of will and consciousness and raised above reason."

Now, in opposition to this whole tendency to abstract metaphysical speculation and its issue in contemplative Mysticism, we have the Hebrew and Christian conception of God as Personal, and its issue in an ethical and spiritual relationship between the finite spirit and the Father of spirits.

From first to last the Biblical conception is that of a Personal God, and far from Christ's teaching and Christian experience superseding this, it does but emphasize the truth of it. Christ represents the being and character of God in terms of human life, and to this extent justifies the anthropomorphic language which men are necessarily driven to employ when striving to do justice to their deepest experience of communion. The highest thing we know in human life is human personality, and reason alone bids us think of God as at least not falling below the level of personality, even though He may be infinitely more than is suggested by that term. We do make God after our image, but if it be true that He made us in His, we cannot be far wrong in assuming that He is not so totally unlike us as to render all human analogies meaningless when we seek to form some conception of His Being and Character.

"Hellenism," says Windelband, "sees in personality, in however purely spiritual a manner it may be conceived, a restriction and a characteristic of the finite, which it would keep at a distance from the Supreme Being, and admit only for the particular gods. Christianity, as a living religion,

demands a *personal relation of man to the ground of the world conceived of as supreme personality*, and it expresses this demand in the thought of the *divine sonship of man*."

Now, it would be idle to deny that this concept of God as Perfect Personality presents intellectual difficulties which are almost insuperable. At the same time, it would be a betrayal of the verdict of our deepest spiritual experience if we were to abandon our belief in a Personal God in order to achieve intellectual consistency.

What is the verdict of religious experience on this question? The results of modern research in the departments of comparative religion and psychology tend to justify the place of religion as a real and vital factor in human life. Far from the whole subject of religious experience being lightly dismissed as vain delusion, and its data being regarded as purely subjective and relative, we have an increasing tendency to grant that in the prayer-life and communion we are in touch with Reality. What the content of that Reality may be is in dispute, but that it exists is recognized by all who are conscious of the power and vitality of the religious life in the history of man's development.<sup>1</sup>

That Religion is in touch with the Real—that in religious experience we do find God—is a great advance on nineteenth-century philosophical materialism. If we have the Divine within man's spirit, then the whole of religious experience has reference to an Object, and that Object, its character and content, may be deduced from the empirical data of man's communion and contact with the Unseen. Now, is the Object a Personal God or an Impersonal Absolute?

On this question the verdict of religious experience—man's activity in the highest and loftiest part of his being—ought to have the decisive voice.

If man's activity in the realm of ethical and spiritual values gives him a Personal God as the truest explanation of his experience, we are justified in setting this against the verdict

<sup>1</sup> See especially Troeltsch, "Empiricism and Platonism in the Philosophy of Religion," *Harvard Theological Review*, October 1912; and Dr. D. C. Macintosh, *Theology as an Empirical Science*.

of his logical or intellectual activity, which posits a bare abstraction as the result of an intellectual dialectic.

Wm. James in *A Pluralistic Universe* has rightly protested against the disastrous results which the vice of intellectualism has wrought in the philosophical treatment of the nature and character of the "Absolute."

"The great claim for the Absolute is that by supposing it we make the world appear more rational. . . . Men are once for all so made that they prefer a rational world to believe in and to live in. But rationality has at least four dimensions—intellectual, æsthetical, moral, and practical; and to find a world rational to the maximal degree *in all these respects simultaneously* is no easy matter. . . . Whatever demand for rationality we find satisfied by a philosophic hypothesis, we are liable to find some other demand for rationality unsatisfied by the same hypothesis. The rationality we gain in one coin we thus pay for in another; and the problem accordingly seems at first sight to resolve itself into that of getting a conception which will yield the largest *balance* of rationality rather than one which will yield perfect rationality of every description." <sup>1</sup>

Upon this significant passage we may make two observations:

1. That if rationality has four dimensions, we have no right to listen exclusively to the verdict of one, the intellect, at the expense of the other three—the æsthetic, the moral, and the practical.

Bergson and Croce have vindicated the æsthetic; the Pragmatists, including Wm. James himself, have shown that the varieties of religious experience have value for life, if not objective truth. Our point is that the moral and spiritual activities give us data for a judgment which should rank at least on a par with those of the intellectual and the æsthetic.

2. That the demand for a conception which shall yield the largest balance of rationality is a challenge to Christian Theism to present in a Philosophy of Religion a reasoned statement of man's place and significance in the universe as a member of a Realm of Ends, such as will commend itself as

<sup>1</sup> pp. 111 ff.

against other rival theories competing for our philosophical allegiance.

Can Christian Theism furnish a more rational solution of the problems of Philosophy than, e.g., Monism or Pluralism?

What can be said for the concept of Perfect Personality as applied to God?

I venture to think that a renewed study of Lotze's contribution to this subject will be found very helpful to Christian Theism in the light of the modern objections to the concept of Divine Personality which are urged by the Absolutists, who dismiss the idea as a mere piece of anthropomorphism unworthy of philosophical consideration. "The deity which they want is, of course, finite, a person like ourselves," says Mr. Bradley, referring to us poor deluded Theists. The answer is Lotze's treatment of the concept worked out in the *Microcosmus*.

"Two distinct series of attributes through which man tries to comprehend the Being of God," he writes, "recall to us the two impulses from which arose the notion of God and belief in Him. Metaphysical attributes of Unity, Eternity, Omnipotence, and Omnipresence determine Him as the ground of all finite reality; ethical attributes of Wisdom, Justice, and Holiness satisfy our longing to find in that which has supreme reality supreme worth also."

Hence—

"the longing of the soul to apprehend as reality the Highest Good which it is able to feel cannot be satisfied by or even consider any form of the existence of that Good except Personality."<sup>1</sup>

He goes on to show the untenableness of the grounds for the attempts to find more satisfying forms of existence for this Highest Good—e.g. ideas of an Eternal World-Order, Infinite Substance, Self-developing Idea—and his conclusion is in favour of the postulate of Perfect Personality.

"The true reality that is and ought to be," he tells us, "is not matter and is still less Idea, but is the living personal

<sup>1</sup> vol. ii, pp. 671-2.

Spirit of God and the world of personal spirits which He has created. They only are the place in which Good and good things exist ; to them alone does there appear an extended material world, by the forms and movements of which the thought of the cosmic Whole makes itself intelligible through intuition to every finite mind.”<sup>1</sup>

This passage is significant for our purpose, since there is a very strong tendency in modern Philosophy to emphasize the concept of “Values.” Once ethical and spiritual values are admitted as of the very texture of Reality, the question must be faced, Values for whom ? Does not the admission of the presence of Values carry with it the admission of Personal Subject, a Personal God, as the ultimate Reality, and the consequent guarantee that Values are conserved ? A notable defence of the significance of Values for Theism has been offered to us recently in Professor Sorley’s Gifford Lectures, *Moral Values and the Idea of God*. We owe a debt to Lotze for his reminder to the philosophical world that Goodness, Beauty, Truth, are meaningless abstractions if considered as things in themselves. We only know them as they are revealed in personal lives. Good and good things exist in and for persons. If, therefore, we claim for the Platonic Ideas an ultimate Reality, this carries with it the postulate of a Personal God in and for whom they exist.

The outstanding objection to the ascription of Personality to God is the fact that personality as we know it is a limitation. At Dr. Tollinton puts it forcibly :

“ Personality is a limitation, as well as a prerogative ; and while God’s being must contain all that is of value in the human nature of which He is the source, it is plain that personality will be a very different thing according as it exists in man or in the Godhead. Let any one,” he says, “ carefully think out all that his own personality owes to the mere fact that he lives this life in the body, that

Thro’ the frame that binds him in  
His isolation grows defined,

and then ask himself what will be his notion of personality if all this influence be deducted. The necessity for greater

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 728.



caution in much of our easy assertion about ' a personal God ' will be evident at once." <sup>1</sup>

This, of course, is very true, but I think that Lotze's treatment meets the objection. When we argue from the human to the Divine, we are well aware that our thought is moving from the imperfect and conditioned to the Perfect and the Unconditioned. We must not transfer the accidents and the imperfections and limitations of finite personality when we pass from ourselves to the thought of God. What we seek to do is to postulate of Him the very essence of Personality dimly and imperfectly mirrored in our finite selves, which are but pale copies of an Eternal Divine Original. Lotze would teach us that limitation is not the producing cause, but a hindrance to the full development of personality. " We are not so much complete persons," he tells us, " as on the road to personality." <sup>2</sup>

" Perfect personality is in God only ; to all finite minds there is allotted but a pale copy thereof ; the finiteness of the finite is not a producing condition of this Personality, but a limit and a hindrance of its development." <sup>3</sup>

It is in this way that Lotze meets the objection urged against the conception of a Personal God. It is true that limitation is the characteristic of finite personality, and true also that the condition of its development is the presence of the Non-Ego, which in the case of God cannot exist, or if it does, then He is conditioned and finite. The answer is that we do not know what true personality is. If an examination of the finite reveals our limitations, it equally reveals also suggestions and unrealized capacities of the human spirit, with seemingly inexhaustible powers of a higher becoming for finite selves. We can argue from the imperfect to the perfect : from what we are capable of becoming to what He is who made us in His own Image, after His likeness.

The Source of our ideal self cannot be less than personal. Hence the postulate of the Ultimate Reality as Perfect Personality.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 348.

<sup>2</sup> *Outlines of the Philosophy of Religion*, ch. iv.

<sup>3</sup> *Microcosmus*, ii, p. 688.

How far are we entitled in this connexion to speak in any philosophical meaning of God as our Father ?

If the central teaching of Christ concerning God is this great concept of Divine Fatherhood, and we are asked whether such a term, with all its suggestive associations, is to be applied to God as He is, or whether it is but a human analogy meant to mirror, however imperfectly, a relationship which cannot adequately be expressed in any terms intelligible to finite minds, we can say in reply that, whilst fully aware of the illegitimacy of transferring the associations of human paternity to God, none the less we seek to do justice to the deepest instincts of our being and the highest verdict of our reason when we think of God as the "Father of spirits," Creator and Sustainer of finite selves, related to us by the fact of creation, and akin to us in a deep sense, dimly adumbrated in the human relationship, not of physical, but of ethical and spiritual parenthood.

"We are His offspring." If in the interests of logic objection be urged to the term "Father," we have to remember that the whole truth of the Eternal Fatherhood is contained in the more universal concept of the Johannine theology, "God is Love." Such a thought gives dignity and worth to the meanest of the sons of men, and is the guarantee that the finite spirit in communion with the Author of its being has value and meaning.

Far from personality being a by-product, a temporary phase of an impersonal Absolute, a mode of the Divine Being or Substance, an epiphenomenon, we need to remind ourselves that "it is the essential feature of the Christian conception of the world that it regards the person and relations of persons to one another as the essence of reality."

In spite, therefore, of the difficulties created by the concept of a Personal God, we contend that Christian Philosophy, following the lines indicated by Lotze, may continue to maintain the postulate of Perfect Personality as applied to God, and to regard the ultimate Reality as the Living Personal Spirit of God, All Holy, All Love, and the world of personal spirits as the City of God.

## CHAPTER V

### TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE

WE have now to consider these postulates in the light of spiritual Monism and Monistic Pantheism.

If the problem of Philosophy in the rival systems of Monism and Pluralism is to find room for the Many in the One and to define the relationship between them, whilst empirical data give us a pluralistic universe and reason seeks logical coherence in an Absolute in which the many are embraced, theology offers us a *via media* which seeks room for the "eaches" in the All without destroying either the Sovereign Absoluteness and entire self-sufficingness of the One or the reality, freedom, and permanence of the Many.

This it seeks to achieve by means of the postulates of the Trinity in Unity, the Divine Transcendence and Immanence.

God in Christian Theism is Absolute, Sovereign, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, and Omniscient.

Our age needs to learn afresh the truth, over-emphasized by Calvinism, of the Divine Sovereignty.

God is not dependent upon His creation, and is complete without it. He does not in this sense stand in need of us, nor is His perfection achieved by means of us or bound up with ours. He is not a growing God or a developing being. This is what Calvin was seeking to express when he emphasized the supreme end of man to be, not his own salvation, but God's glory, which is the sovereign good of man, or, as Luther put it: "As long as men advance the smallest claim to anything as their own, God is defrauded of His right."<sup>1</sup>

"The fact that God has need of us is ultimate to the religious consciousness," says Moberly in *Foundations*, to which an acute critic in *Some Loose Stones*<sup>2</sup> answers:

"I find no difficulty at all in reason in conceiving God as

<sup>1</sup> *Comm. Isaiah*, lxiv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 205 ff.

existing in all the self-sufficiency of His triune nature, without so much as a solitary angel to chant His praises, without a solitary planet to serve Him on its course. . . . What I seem to have learnt in all the books of devotional theology I have ever read is primarily that God has no need of me. At the background of every act of humility I ever make, I reflect that I have no possible right to exist, whereas God exists in His own right ; that neither I nor any other creature were made because we were necessary to God, but just in order that we might have the privilege of serving Him. To say that we were created for God's glory is a very different thing from saying that He could not have got on without us." <sup>1</sup>

We live in an age which has reacted against Calvinism and gone to the opposite extreme, thus missing the Old Testament emphasis upon the Divine Sovereignty, and missing the lesson of humility inculcated by it. We have, however, in the light of God's Love, come to realize more vividly the intrinsic worth of the finite individual soul, as this was revealed to the world by Jesus Christ. But if Calvin over-emphasized the Divine Sovereignty, we must never forget the Sovereignty of the Divine Love, and whilst recognizing that the soul possesses "a new setting in the counsels of God and a new 'place in the sun,' " as it has been put, and doing justice to that "sense of human worth which the world owes supremely to Christ, who reveals God's mind," none the less we must preserve the truth of the Divine Transcendence and realize that any intrinsic worth we possess we owe to God, who made us, and thus be helped to a proper attitude of humility towards Him that claims nothing and a dependence that gratefully accepts anything at His hands.

Granted that God is Eternal Creator and would cease to be God, did He cease to obey the laws of His own Being and rest from creation, this does not imply that the finite world we know had no beginning in time, though it was made out of nothing. God was Creator before or prior to our creation, and is independent of it.

The Absolute of speculative philosophy is a Whole in some

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in A. M. Hunter, "The Doctrine of God in Calvin's Theology," chapter in *The Teaching of Calvin*.

sensè made up of its parts, and has no meaning apart from the parts of which it is composed. It may be an All-embracing Unity, but the Unity is not independent of or prior to the multiplicity ; in fact, it is the multiplicity viewed *sub specie æternitatis*. Applied to religion this is Pantheism: the Creator is confounded with the Creation.

The influence of Eastern thought in the West has been so far-reaching that it is not surprising to find Pantheism lurking in many tendencies in modern philosophy, and it reveals itself in the depreciation of Personality, Human and Divine.

The All is God. This excludes Divine Personality. God is the All. This rejects finite individuality as in any sense having an existence in its own right over against the All of which it is but a transitory appearance.

Christian Theism endeavours to avoid these pitfalls. The fact is that so long as we are content to allow our thought to move within the range of "Wholes" and "Parts," we are thinking of an ontological relationship, and there is no escape from a Pantheism in which the parts are absorbed in the Whole or the Whole identified with the parts. The other way out is the acceptance of a frankly pluralistic system of independent and unrelated reals.

Now, Christian Theism lifts the whole problem up into a higher range of thought, and deals with relationship between finite spirits and the Father of spirits. It rejects an ontological in favour of an ethical relationship, and thinks in terms of personality, with the corresponding concepts of affinity, kinship. The truth in Pantheism is the reluctance of the human mind to exclude God from any part of His Creation.

God is All in All. But He need not, therefore, be identified with the Creation. All is not God because He pervades All through and through. He is the Ground and Source of the being and becoming of all that is finite and created.

"Observe," says Professor James, "that all the irrationalities and puzzles which the Absolute gives rise to, and from which the finite God remains free, are due to the fact that the Absolute has nothing, absolutely nothing, outside of itself." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 125.



This reveals the problem for Theism. Our God also must have nothing, absolutely nothing, outside of Himself. In what sense, then, can we maintain His absolute sovereignty compatible with the measure of real human freedom necessary for the ethical and spiritual development of finite spirits?

We shall face this problem in the sequel when we come to deal with the Omnipotence of God in relation to finite selves, and we shall see reason for rejecting the way of escape which Wm. James offers us in the conception of a "finite God." In the meantime we may note that this thinker will have nothing to do with what he calls a complete "block-universe." Criticizing Monistic Idealism, he says: <sup>1</sup>

"Either absolute independence or absolute mutual dependence—this, then, is the only alternative allowed by these thinkers. . . . Of course, 'independence,' if absolute, would be preposterous, so the only conclusion allowable is that, in Ritchie's words, 'every single event is ultimately related to every other, and determined by the whole to which it belongs.' The whole complete block-universe through and through, therefore, or no universe at all."

"The whole question," he says, "revolves in very truth about the word 'some.' " <sup>2</sup>

"Radical empiricism and pluralism stand out for the legitimacy of the notion of 'some': each part of the world is in some ways connected, in some other ways not connected with its other parts, and the ways can be discriminated, for many of them are obvious, and their differences are obvious to view. Absolutism, on its side, seems to hold that 'some' is a category ruinously infected with self-contradictoriness, and that the only categories inwardly consistent, and therefore pertinent to reality, are 'all' and 'none.' "

Professor James then goes on to show that the question really runs into a wider and still more general one, dealt with by Bradley and the later writers of the Monistic school—viz. the problem of relationship.

Now, this is vital for a Christian Philosophy which seeks to deal with Reality in terms of Personality.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 79, 80.

The question for Philosophy is this, to put it as Wm. James put it :

“ Whether all the relations with other things, possible to a being, are pre-included in its intrinsic nature and enter into its essence, or whether in respect to some of these relations, it can be without reference to them, and if it ever does enter into them, does so adventitiously and as it were by an after-thought. This is the great question as to whether ‘ external ’ relations can exist. . . . They seem to, undoubtedly,” he adds.

Now, a Christian Philosophy has its own postulates in which to express and attempt to solve the problem thus raised. The problem is, in one sense, to find a unity in which the Many are not “ absorbed,” to preserve the absolute sovereignty of the One with the relative freedom of the Many ; in another sense it is to justify the concept of relationship as of the very texture of reality and not appearance ; in another to effect some synthesis between Transcendence and Immanence. Pluralism secures the freedom of the Many at the expense of abandoning the Absolute. Monism secures the Absolute at the expense of a denial of freedom to the Many.

Christian Theism, in seeking a *via media*, defines the content of both the One and the Many, and in its definition clings close to empirical data supplied by a careful scrutiny of the behaviour of finite human personality in its deepest moments in religious experience. It refuses to deny a measure of real freedom to the individual in ethical and spiritual relationship on the ground that communion involves duality—God and the Soul ; that the realization of our truest freedom is, as a matter of experience, found in kinship with that Other in whom we live and move and have our being, by virtue of our difference from as much as our affinity with Him ; that in communion we enjoy a real existence in Him, with such a measure of separation from Him as may conserve our finite human personality in relationship to, though not in identity with, God.

In upholding this position in the interests of ethical freedom

and the verdict of religious experience, we are forced to define more clearly what we mean by Transcendence and Immanence. Can we justify their claim to any philosophical value as postulates ?

Dr. Tennant, in a trenchant article in the *Constructive Quarterly*, has indicated the vital need for Christian Theism to define explicitly exactly what is meant by these correlative terms, "Transcendence" and "Immanence." We quite realize the desirability of fuller definition, but doubt very much its possibility. We should contend that religious experience gives us the knowledge of a God who is ontologically remote and dynamically near. The fact of the Divine Transcendence and Immanence is a verdict of the religious consciousness, but when we seek to define the content of the fact more closely it must be confessed that we find ourselves in difficulties, and personally I am bound to say that none of the analogies which have been suggested are intellectually satisfying. Our failure to define, however, does not necessarily forbid us to continue to indicate by such terms an experience which eludes strict definition.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The problem has been very ably discussed at a Symposium of the Aristotelian Society on the question, Can Individual Minds be included in the Mind of God ? \*

In the course of the discussion Professor Muirhead subjected the various analogies that have been suggested by different writers to a critical analysis, and gave cogent reasons for rejecting (1) the æsthetic analogy—the relation of the Divine to the human mind compared to the relation of the dramatist to the characters in his work ; (2) the analogy from telepathy and mental dissociation. He went on to defend Dante's suggestion that the key to the relation of the finite to the infinite mind must be sought for in the possibility of a real unity of will and purpose. "It is in the universal which is implicit in every particular human experience," Professor Muirhead contended, "that minds melt and interpenetrate ; and, granted there is a mind in whose experience the partially discerned meanings of our world form a harmonious whole, the quality of inclusiveness is not strained in being applied to such a relation." Again, "the real unity of content must be conceived of as penetrating the existence of the separate wills and legitimizing language which, if unfamiliar to common sense, is at least

\* Aristotelian Society, supplementary vol. ii, *Problems of Science and Philosophy*, p. 109 ff.

The debt we owe to Monism is a renewed grasp of the principle of the Divine Immanence. All that is contained in the theological term "Omnipresence" is confirmed by the truth Monism seeks to emphasize—viz. the internal working of the Divine in Nature, Human Life, in the material and mental, not less than in the moral and spiritual. In this way we escape a false Deism, and conserve the truth which the writers in a recent volume of essays on "*The Spirit*" are desirous of bringing home to the modern mind. We no longer regard God as working *ab extra*. The thought of God as external to His universe, interfering from time to time in a capricious manner, is a Deistic conception which must yield place to the deeper perception of the Divine Mind expressing itself in ever fuller degree in and through the Creation.

Dr. Frank Ballard, in an earlier work *The True God*, to which we may still turn with profit, drew forcible attention to the fact that the thought of God as the Ground and sustaining Principle in and through all the processes of Nature

natural to the deeper forms of religious experience." Hence he bids us have the courage of our conviction and support our theistic conclusion by claiming the power of self-inclusion in the life of the whole through unity of purpose, as of the very essence of spirit (p. 134).

The theist was still further encouraged by Dr. Schiller, who pointed out that Science does not fear self-contradictions, and since, therefore, we must recognize the existence of conceptions which are *essentially* self-contradictory, the religious demand that every soul shall be itself, and responsible for itself, and that yet God shall be "all in all," and all-inclusive, may be one of them (pp. 137, 138). Dr. Schiller went on to criticize Dr. Muirhead's suggestion that the conception of purpose might bridge the gulf between the human mind and the Absolute, and Dr. d'Arcy pointed out that even were we able to prove that selves interpenetrate one another as sharing a common meaning and purpose, it would certainly not prove that they are included in the mind of God. It seems safer, then, to remain dissatisfied with all human analogies, to acquiesce in a solution in its nature self-contradictory, and yet be faithful to the facts of religious experience, since, as Dr. Muirhead reminds us, "there are perhaps no religious phrases that have been more powerful and universal in their appeal than that which claims for the saint a life that is hid with Christ in God, and that other which describes the ideal Christian experience, 'I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in one.'"

and human activity is fully confirmed by the great Monistic principle, with its ever-widening generalizations, as the result of discoveries in Science and its various branches. The conception of an ultimate First Cause, adequate for the explanation of all other causes, the thought of all laws issuing from and explained by a common source, is the very nerve of the Monistic philosophy, with its search for the Absolute. Theism rejects a materialistic explanation in favour of a spiritual. It looks to Mind and not to Matter as the source and explanation of all things. For Matter and Motion or "Space-Time" we substitute what we think are undeniably greater, Mind and Spirit. Theism confirms the craving of the human mind for some far-reaching unification which shall embrace the undoubted dualisms given in our finite apprehension of the universe and ourselves as part of it. It finds this principle of unification, not in an Impersonal "Absolute," but in the perfect Personality of the Living God. This is its lesson to all Monistic systems which are content to seek for Reality below the level of the highest we know—viz. a truly human personal life.

Whilst, then, accepting from Spiritual Monism the confirmation of the truth of the Divine Immanence, Christian Theism must go on to postulate as against Monistic Pantheism the equally vital truth of the Divine Transcendence.

If we are asked what we mean by Divine Transcendence, we may fall back upon what are confessedly imperfect analogies in our efforts to apprehend what we cannot fully comprehend. The problem is, however, considerably clarified if we lift it into the sphere of personality.

I do not see, myself, that so long as we dwell in human bodies in time and space we can escape from the employment of spatial terms in dealing with this problem. This is perfectly legitimate so long as we remind ourselves that we are using *spatial* imagery to describe *spiritual* activity. We know that in some way *we dwell in* our own bodies, and yet are not *of* them in the sense of being identified with them. We are dealing, in fact, with two distinct or at any rate distinguishable orders of reality—Extension and Mind, a material body



and a spiritual self. We permeate our bodies through and through: are immanent in them, yet not spatially present. At the same time we transcend them. The Mind, i.e., "overflows" the body at every point. We can never locate the human spirit in any part of our bodily organism. We infinitely transcend as living spirits the material bodies in every particle of which we immanently dwell. Hence the analogy is to some extent justified: What we are to our bodies, that God is to the whole creation—immanent in the whole and in every minutest part, yet transcendent above the whole as the sole condition of indwelling in any part.

Once we weaken either term and lose hold of the truth sought to be expressed by it, we fall either into a Deism which thinks of a transcendent, "absentee God" divorced from His Creation, or of a purely immanent God identified with His Creation.

If Monism teaches us the lesson of an all-comprehensive Unity, human nature, not least in its religious experience, testifies to an unshakeable conviction (*a*) that we are not part of God in any pantheistic sense, and (*b*) that God is something more than a name for an all-inclusive Unity of which we and the Creation are part. God is not another name for the Absolute in which all distinctions are extinguished or the totality of finite spirits viewed *sub specie æternitatis*.

The more we consider the systems of the Neo-Platonic thinkers, Plotinus and Proclus, bound up as they are with the essentially Hellenistic view-point of salvation and blessedness of the individual consisting in absorption with the All-One, the more we feel that their intellectualistic bias fails to do justice to much in our religious experience which bids us seek redemption through the moral and spiritual activities of our finite creative and free personality in union with, and yet in dependence upon and co-operation with, the Divine Spirit, rather than in a physical, psychical, and intellectual activity seeking to escape the sensuous in order to attain a mode of life of a suprarational, mystic kind, with an ideal of passivity and contemplative lifelessness, at the expense of all that we have learned to regard as distinctively human in the finite self.

If the three "moments" of the *via negativa* are "persistence," "procession," and "return," "identity," "difference," and final "union" of that which has become temporarily distinguished, we are left with nothing but a pantheistic absorption—the ecstatic rapture being gained by the loss of just that difference between ourselves and God which we have learned to prize as the *sine qua non* of communion with Him. Once substitute identity of essence in the place of affinity and kinship and we are reduced to modes of the Divine Substance with the ideal of the loss of all that is distinctively ourselves in ethical and spiritual activity as our highest gain. We become other than human at the expense of leaving behind us what is our glory, our freedom, and the one thing we dare to believe God values in us—viz. our distinctive individuality.

If it be true that kinship and affinity are the sole condition for right understanding of the thought and ideals of another, we may perhaps hazard the conjecture that Plotinus has had to wait until our own day to be understood by a kindred spirit and revealed by an *alter ego* in the person of the outstanding great theological philosopher of our time, Dr. Ingè. If anyone can make Neo-Platonism intelligible to the Western mind, saturated as it is by twenty centuries of Christian experience under an entirely opposite concept of the Being and Character of God as essentially a Dynamic rather than a Static Reality, it is the present Dean of St. Paul's, whose Gifford Lectures on "Plotinus" will remain for many a long day the classical exposition of this philosophy of life. Mysticism in the Neo-Platonic sense of the term has an appeal and a fascination for many minds difficult to resist, yet we venture to suggest that its presuppositions are fundamentally subversive of essential elements in the religious experience, and that Christianity is committed to the concept of the permanent reality and value of the finite creative personality in relationship to a God who is All-Holy, All-Love, the Absolute Personality: this alone will guarantee the possibility of personal immortality for the individual soul, and secure relationship in communion as of the very essence of reality.

A Christian Philosophy is committed to the rejection of all

emanation theories. We hold to creation as an act of the Divine Will, not an eternally necessary physical or psychical process, not "a logical necessity of the unfolding of His essence" on the part of God, but the free act of a Creator free to act, and in His Love creating "created creators" with such a measure of freedom and independence in relationship to Himself as to enable us in our turn to become centres of ethical and spiritual activity, free, within the limits of our finite nature and God's eternal purpose, to achieve something in the sphere of values, free to become the sons of God and heirs of eternal life.

Christian Theism is committed to this concept of personality, human and Divine. It is one of the most difficult, and at the same time one of the richest, concepts in the whole range of religious philosophical thought. Our thesis is that in it alone is contained the view of God in relation to the world which best fits in with the data derived from an examination of the whole content of our experience, the verdict of our whole personality in its many-sided activities in the sphere of the æsthetic, the moral, the practical, if not the intellectual, and it enables us to do justice to the religious experience of the soul in communion with God.

The issue of a philosophy which fails to do justice to these factors may be seen if we glance for a moment at Dr. Bosanquet's valuable little contribution to the discussion, "What is Religion?"

Dr. Bosanquet is quite sure that Religion is the only thing that makes life worth living, but when we examine what he understands by it we find that his conception falls short, as we think, of the richness of content it can possess if the God we worship is a Living Personal Father. Dr. Bosanquet worships "Values" with all the enthusiasm of a devotee. "Truth," "Love," "Beauty," he would remind us, must be followed by a disinterested regard. Thus may we enter into union with the supreme good, and find peace in a deeper synthesis wherein "faith and works, love and wisdom, supreme disinterestedness and supreme happiness, will be one."

It is all very beautiful and persuasively put, revealing as it does in the philosopher himself a fine sensitiveness and spiritual appreciation of those values in human life which have the hall-mark of supreme worth, and for which we dare to claim reality. Very beautiful, I repeat, but it leaves us cold. How much warmer our appreciation and devotion if we believe those values to inhere in a personal life, and can claim that they have been revealed in an historic Person who lived them out in the time-process, Jesus of Nazareth!

There is surely a vast difference between a cold morality which Reason bids us respect and a moral God who commands our worship and wins our love: between a "Supreme Good" as an intellectual abstraction and the Good God whose Goodness is our guarantee of its existence as man's supreme end and ideal.

Mr. W. J. Ferrar has put the point very well in a review of Dr. Bosanquet's book in *Theology* (S.P.C.K., October 1920):

"The religion of Dr. Bosanquet," he says, "knows nothing more definite for its object than the 'Supreme Good'; predicates like Father, Creator, King, and Lord, are expressly ruled out as accidental, and indeed likely to lead the soul astray from union with the true Eternal, with whom our highest values are associated. This," says Mr. Ferrar, "seems to be the point of attack upon Dr. Bosanquet's conception of religion.

"When faith weakens, the unity of the spirit tends to sever itself into ideas of persons in relation with each other, and the common conceptions of persons begin to react," Dr. Bosanquet writes, and [as Mr. Ferrar says] exposes a point of view that is scarcely comprehensible to the Christian thinker. For the predicates which Dr. Bosanquet so airily rejects, as 'words which may help our sluggish imaginations,' are precisely what make religion real to the Christian, whatever element of symbolism he may recognize in the terms. Christianity is, indeed, the revelation of God as personal, and the personal predicates rejected by Dr. Bosanquet are practically what we mean by religion. It is that very stress on the intimate personal relations between God and man which is central for Christianity. Prayer and Sacraments in our

religion are not subjective 'means to renew and fortify faith,' but actual communion of person with person."

It is well in this connexion to remind ourselves that ancient philosophy offered God as an object of contemplation and intellectual satisfaction, whilst the Stoic creed pointed men to the supremacy of "values," but failed to win their hearts in the way that Christianity did. What was the secret of the success of Christianity against philosophical systems and Stoic morality? Platonism appealed to an inner circle of intellectuals; Stoicism won the allegiance of despair from men faced by the circumstances of their time to expect death at any moment through the change of fortune's wheel. Neither creed claimed or won the allegiance of the common people. An appeal of another kind was needed—at once simpler, more truly human: an appeal not primarily or exclusively to either the intellect or even the moral sense, but to the whole man, and at his deepest level in his deepest need; an appeal by a Supreme Person to persons, from the heart to the heart. Thus Christianity vindicated the supremacy of Personality, Human and Divine. It revealed Plato's ideal Values incarnate in a Person, Jesus of Nazareth, translated into terms of human life.<sup>1</sup>

Mill's famous utterance<sup>2</sup> is worth repeating in this connexion:

"Not even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Jesus Christ would approve our life."

Values, then, so we suggest, are meaningless if divorced from a Personal Life in which they inhere and for which they have meaning; in other words, Christianity is truer to life when it stakes its claim upon the supremacy of Personality, Human and Divine.

<sup>1</sup> "It is the great glory of God's revelation," as Dr. John Duncan said, "that it has turned our abstracts into concretes" (quoted by T. H. Darlow, *Holy Ground*, chapter on "The Countenance of Christ").

<sup>2</sup> *Three Essays on Theism*, p. 255.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE OMNIPOTENCE OF LOVE IN RELATION TO HUMAN FREEDOM

IN *Some Dogmas of Religion*, Dr. McTaggart has two interesting chapters on "God as Omnipotent" and "A Non-Omnipotent God." His treatment of these questions will form a convenient starting-point for our enquiry as to the compatibility of the Divine Sovereignty with Human Freedom, and what place, if any, there is in Christian philosophy for the concept of a "finite God."

"By God," says Dr. McTaggart, "I mean a being who is personal, supreme, and good." He then immediately proceeds to qualify this statement in a way which makes it quite clear that by God he does not mean what a Christian Theist understands by the term. By "personal" Dr. McTaggart means that God is self-conscious. By "supreme" is meant "much more powerful than any other being and so powerful that his volition can profoundly affect the whole sum of existence," but *not* that he is omnipotent. By "good" is meant that at the least he is "of such a nature that he would be rightly judged to be more good than evil," but *not* that he is perfect. We should answer that this is precisely what we do *not* understand by "God," and that the name cannot rightly be applied to any being short of Omnipotent Personal Goodness. If we postulate a being less than this we are forced in mind to conceive of a greater in just those essential attributes which McTaggart's "God" fails to exhibit in their supremacy and completeness. Why does McTaggart qualify his definition in this significant way? The answer is that he starts with an *a priori* conception of what Omnipotence involves, and then

sees that he cannot apply his definition to God as he conceives him.

What does McTaggart understand by Omnipotence? Omnipotent in the strict sense of the word means for him a being who "could do anything whatever."<sup>1</sup> Omnipotent with him evidently means "able to do all things." "There is nothing," he tells us, "which an omnipotent God cannot do—otherwise he would not be omnipotent."<sup>2</sup> "An omnipotent person is one who can do anything."<sup>3</sup> Hence we are not surprised to find him stating in all seriousness as an argument in refutation of God's omnipotence the old question: "Could God create a being of such a nature that he could not subsequently destroy it?"<sup>4</sup> Whatever answer we make to this, we are told, is fatal to God's omnipotence. "If we say that he could not create such a being, then there is something that he cannot do. If we say that he can create such a being, then there is still something that he cannot do—to follow such an act of creation by an act of destruction."

What are we to say to arguments of this kind? Simply this, that we can only judge of the meaning of Omnipotence when we take it, not in itself as an abstract proposition, but as it is revealed in a concrete form as an attribute or function of a Supreme Personality. The Theist is dealing, not with naked Omnipotence, but with the Omnipotence of a Personal God whose essence is Holy Love. The Omnipotence of such a God must be spiritual through and through. It is exercised in accordance with the Nature of the Subject in whom it inheres. God's power is not that of physical force, but moral and spiritual suasion. We need not labour this point, as it has been fully dealt with in recent literature upon the subject.<sup>5</sup> All we need to do is to indicate it as revealing a profounder conception of Omnipotence than anything suggested in McTaggart's treatment of the subject, and one which we believe will go far to mitigate the chief objections he finds to the thought of an Omnipotent God.

<sup>1</sup> p. 188.

<sup>2</sup> p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> p. 202.

<sup>4</sup> p. 204.

<sup>5</sup> *Vide*, e.g., "Prayer and the World's Order": A. C. Turner in *Essays Concerning Prayer*, Part II, *passim*.

Once grasp the significance of the Omnipotence of Love as the truer conception of God's Almighty Power, and many of the difficulties which centre around the problem of human freedom in relation to God's will are seen to be of our own making, due to imperfect insight into the Christian conception of God as revealed for us in Jesus Christ. We have frankly to accept this revelation as superseding earlier and cruder notions of God's Omnipotence which appear in Old Testament pictures of the Deity as a magnified Eastern despot.

"In the Old Testament this despotic notion of God's omnipotence,"<sup>1</sup> writes Mr. A. C. Turner, "runs as an alien and barbarous current through the literature of love and trust. In Christianity it is melted away in the absoluteness of God's love. But men have never been able to venture themselves sufficiently in love to realize its omnipotence; and Christian theology, while it has dwelt on the love of God manifested in redemption, has never been able to free itself from the notion of compulsive power in its thought of God's creation and direction of the world."

And again: "The history of the growth of spirituality in religion is the gradual disappearance of the belief that God exercises power of the external and compulsive kind, and the realization of the omnipotence of Divine Love to attain its ends without the exercise of compulsion. Love is the only form in which it is possible to figure an omnipotence which is both absolute and moral, for wherever compulsion is present the highest moral result is incompletely achieved. . . . The basis of a spiritual morality is freedom, and the morality of freedom is love."<sup>2</sup> "So the love of God is omnipotent, not as controlling and shaping the outward course of events. Love is omnipotent because it can always in any circumstances give a perfect expression of itself. It has no need to manipulate history, because it is always sufficient to meet any situation. The activity of love is self-giving; it can afford to give itself away, and no reception which it may meet can be either a limitation or a real defeat. If Divine Love is the author of all existence, it follows that nothing can exist wherein love cannot find expression.

"So omnipotence and freedom are complementary to one another. The freedom of the creature is not a limitation of

<sup>1</sup> p. 417.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 419-20.

the omnipotence of God but its expression ; omnipotence is not a limitation of freedom but its ground. In terms of outward relationships this is a paradox for which there is no rational solution. But love is more than rationality ; not contrary to it—indeed, it is its ground—but over and above it.”<sup>1</sup>

It would be an interesting study to take this profounder conception of the Omnipotence of Love and apply it to the objections which McTaggart urges at length in his chapter on “God as Omnipotent.”

Is Omnipotence, for example, consistent with Personality ? According to McTaggart’s definition of Omnipotence, the conception of an Omnipotent Will is shown to be contradictory. Again, the usual objection urged against Perfect Personality is the fact that personality as we know it involves a Non-Ego, or, as McTaggart, following Hegel, prefers to call it, “an Other.” An Omnipotent person must, however, according to McTaggart, be capable of existing without an Other, even an Other which was not existent. Why ? Because he could only be a person on condition that an Other had arisen or would some day arise—i.e. it would be impossible for him to prevent the existence, some time or other, of a universe over against which he could realize his own self-existence. And a person who cannot prevent something from taking place, McTaggart reminds us, is clearly not omnipotent.

Such an argument is meaningless under our conception of what is involved in the Omnipotence of Love revealed in a personal life. The trinitarian doctrine of the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity enables us to grasp the profundity of the simple statement—God is Love. We have no need still further to complicate the problem by the addition of another attribute wholly alien which McTaggart seeks to graft upon his “God.” God is Love, and, as Mr. Turner reminds us, “to say that He is omnipotent is not to give Him an added attribute : it is equivalent to saying that love is omnipotent.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 421.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 424.

The outstanding difficulty in accepting God's omnipotence is undoubtedly the facts of sin and suffering. These present us, indeed, with the very crux of Theism. It is abundantly obvious from a reading of McTaggart's treatment of this subject that, starting as he does with his abstract conception of Omnipotence, he can never hope to show its compatibility with the presence of evil in the world. "Is Omnipotence compatible with Goodness?" he asks, and, of course, he has only to prove the presence and reality of one painful thing in the Universe to argue that an Omnipotent being is responsible for it, and to go on to show that whilst to cause or permit evil is often justifiable in a being of limited power, no such justification can apply to an Omnipotent being. How, then, can he be called good? His goodness can only be preserved at the expense of his omnipotence. Hence the conclusion for a non-omnipotent God as the only solution of the vexed problem of evil. If, however, we postulate the Omnipotence of Love, then that is compatible, as we have seen, with Human Freedom. It allows for an element of contingency as the *sine qua non* of a true ethical and spiritual activity on the part of a free created spirit. Man's freedom involves the possibility of evil and sin. God's Omnipotence deals with this fact, but the treatment is Love's method all through, involving as this does the impossibility of using physical compulsion, but only ethical and spiritual suasion. The Omnipotence of Love means its competence to deal with all situations and all possibilities. The fact that the free-will of man is the free-will of a created creator means that the total possibilities for good or evil on the part of the creature are fixed. Man can only sin within the limits of his finite being. Omnipotent love can deal, we believe, with the utmost that evil can do. Theoretically the free-will of man can resist God's will for ever. Practically the question resolves itself into the query, How long can human perverseness and stubborn self-will withstand Omnipotent Love's appeal to that in the created being which is of Divine origin, and which constitutes the deepest and the truest self of even the meanest of the sons of men? Practical experience suggests what theory queries—



viz. the final certainty of the triumph of "Love Divine, all loves excelling." This is not to make light of the appalling results of man's misuse of his freedom. It is to recognize, however, that this misuse is set within certain bounds. The power of evil is not omnipotent. If we can show that on the whole the facts of experience seem to justify a sane Christian optimism in the final triumph of goodness, we are justified in claiming that this deeper conception of Omnipotence enables us still to cling to the Sovereignty of God in spite of the tremendous force of the argument against it from the side of moral evil.

In this connexion it is helpful to turn to a most illuminating discussion of the problem by Dr. Tennant in some recent articles in the *Expository Times* : <sup>1</sup>

"There is something in goodness" (writes Dr. Tennant) "which promotes its conservation, and something in evil which augurs disruption and extinction, free-will notwithstanding. And this is their intrinsic nature. The apparent gains of wickedness are not consolidated; evil purposes conflict, and so conspiracy in evil is thwarted. On the other hand, there is inevitably a growing consensus of the good, and conquests in goodness are maintained. There is unity of aim, commonness of purpose and interest, between men of good-will. Good can come out of evil, but not evil out of good. The gains of good over evil are cumulative. For the higher the moral tone of the many, the harder to realize and the more obviously evil become the evil inclinations of the few. It is no easy optimism, therefore, on which we rely, but the intrinsic nature of goodness and evil, when we indulge the hope that the moral progress of mankind which history hitherto records will proceed in future ages. And if this be so, the objection that a God who is not omnipotent in the sense that for Him possibility and impossibility are alike is inadequate to secure the ultimate triumph of goodness loses its force. We have no need in this connexion to appeal to Divine Omnipotence in any sense other than that which alone we have found to be reasonable and meaningful: for it is in virtue of God being what He is that goodness and evil are what they intrinsically are, while it is in virtue of their being what they are that the one is destined to prevail over the other."

<sup>1</sup> *Expository Times*, October 1919, "Divine Omnipotence."

I do not wish in the least to minimize the strength of the argument against Theism which arises from the appalling fact of moral evil and suffering. So powerful is its appeal that a strong tendency in modern philosophical thought is driven to take refuge in the concept of a finite God as the only method of reconciliation. So brilliant and keen a theologian and philosopher as Dr. Rashdall presented the case for a "finite god" in a way which is a standing rebuke to the shallow optimism of much Christian opinion on this subject based upon an inadequate appreciation of the full force of the argument against the Goodness of God presented to our finite minds by the sad spectacle of the travail of the whole creation in pain and suffering, and still more by the moral corruption of and its devastating effects in our distracted human nature. It is, however, because so much is at stake for Theism in the acceptance or rejection of the concept of a "finite god" that, in spite of the powerful stimulus which this thought has received as the result of the War, and its wide appeal to the popular mind in the cruder forms in which it has been clothed in the writings of Mr. Wells,<sup>1</sup> none the less we do well to explore every avenue of escape before committing ourselves to a conception which, to my mind, is subversive of the very essence of the Christian doctrine. Against it we postulate the Omnipotence of Love, believing that in this thought there is a way of escape which enables us to preserve at once the Sovereignty of God and the adequacy of His method of dealing with the problem of finite creation and the freedom of man. The existence of finite selves, their relative freedom for ethical and spiritual development, the conditions inherent in the possibilities of such a development, the providential government of the world for this end, and the security for the final consummation of the Divine purpose worked out in co-operation with Omnipotent Love—all these issues are at stake in the acceptance or rejection of the Divine Omnipotence. We do well, therefore, to probe its depths to the utmost of our ability in the effort to understand its content before we reject it in favour of another theory which, whilst it solves some

<sup>1</sup> *Mr. Britling Sees it Through ; God the Invisible King.*

of our intellectual difficulties, raises others, and in any case strikes a fatal blow at a root conviction of the religious consciousness—viz. the Sovereignty of God.

The conception of a "finite" God, whilst it commends itself to some thinkers as a helpful solution of the problem of evil and the dark mystery of suffering, yet is fatal to a consistent doctrine of God. The absolute sovereignty of God is challenged by the concept, and we do well to bear in mind the implications involved in the Divine Omnipotence. The acceptance of a "finite god" as the god of religion is in itself a fatal undermining of religious experience, and it is difficult not to believe that once a half-doubt as to the god's ability to cope with the problems of the universe is introduced, the religious experience of communion and the pouring out of our troubles and perplexities into his ear will lose their vitality, and embrace an element of uncertainty and unreality. Faith's dependence, which is the very nerve of religious experience, rests ultimately upon the unshakeable assurance of God's Omnipotent Love. If we cannot depend upon a "finite god" in the ultimate issue, we shall inevitably begin the search afresh for Someone or Something stronger and more reliable. We are driven behind the "struggling" god to a greater "Invisible King" or "Veiled One," an Inscrutable Fate to which we do well to pay homage.

Again, God's Omnipotence brings with it an assurance of a final consummation of Love's purpose which cannot be frustrated. The end is assured only if the Worker is absolute sovereign. Christian Theism can allow for an element of contingency in the process of the working out of the Divine plan—there is room for reverses, cataclysms, pain, and suffering in the redemptive process by which the Sovereign God leads a free creation to its final goal and secures a free ethical response to His sovereign will and purpose; but faith is bankrupt in the hands of a "finite god" who may fail ultimately. We should have no guarantee that the whole world-process in his hands might not get so out of gear as to end in irretrievable and final disaster. The belief in the Divine Omnipotence is the only sure ground for a sane op-

timism, the only sure deliverance from a hopeless pessimism as we survey the world to-day in its seeming chaotic state and its bewildering clash of interests and aims. It is only the knowledge of "our Father which art *in Heaven*" that can steady us in the day of calamity and bid us cling in hope to the certainty of a better day.

Given a "finite god" who is doing his best, and we may as well acquiesce in a half-doubt as to the meaning of life's struggle, and console ourselves in moral failure with the self-complacency which makes "god" after its own image and pities him without condemning itself. The sovereignty of God is crucial, and Calvinism has still a message on this point in an age of sentimentality.

If "the line of least resistance, both in theology and in philosophy, is to accept, along with the superhuman consciousness, the notion that it is not all-embracing, the notion, in other words, that there is a God, but that he is finite, either in power, or in knowledge, or in both at once,"<sup>1</sup> we can only say that the issues at stake for Christian Theism forbid any such escape from our difficulties. For theology the harder path must be chosen, and even at the cost of consistency we must still postulate an Absolute God, in spite of John Mill's assurance that if we would retain God as a religious object we must give up the notion of His Omnipotence. Far from this being the case, we may with some confidence affirm that religious experience would suffer if we had to worship a non-Absolute god, one whose "will has to struggle with conditions not imposed on that will by itself,"<sup>2</sup> one who "tolerates provisionally what he has not created, and then with endless patience tries to overcome it and live it down"—one, in short, who "has a history."

### MORAL FREEDOM

When we come to the problem of moral and spiritual growth, we are the more confirmed in our belief in the Person-

<sup>1</sup> William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 311.

<sup>2</sup> James, *op. cit.*, p. 294.



ality of God. It is pre-eminently in the realm of religious experience that we learn (a) the character of the God we worship, (b) the purpose and goal of our creation, (c) the conditions of growth and development of the finite spirit.

If God is Love and the purpose of Omnipotent Love is the creation of finite spirits like ourselves in order that we may freely respond to that love and grow into His likeness, it follows that we must have such a measure of freedom and independence as to make possible such a response. Freedom is the *sine qua non* of moral and spiritual growth. The ethical efficacy of an act lies in its voluntary character. We can only achieve something in the realm of ethical and spiritual values if we are free. Such freedom is the necessary condition of any growth for a moral and spiritual being akin to God and created in order to grow and develop into true sonship. Moral responsibility is meaningless apart from such a measure of human freedom as we know ourselves to possess, but which a pantheistic philosophy and a deterministic science would delude us into imagining that we lacked.

Christian Theism finds room for human freedom in ethical and spiritual activity within God. Were we part of God in any ontological sense, such freedom would be meaningless. We should be reduced to automata, strings pulled by the All-embracing One. The doctrine, however, of the Divine Immanence, as we have seen, leaves room for the free movement of the finite spirit within the environment of God in whom we live, and in whose service is perfect freedom. This may be a paradox and an antinomy for the intellect, but it is a commonplace in the realm of actual experience, and notably in the realm of religious experience.

"I live, yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me," is a verdict which is found compatible with the Apostolic injunction, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you." There is a co-operation of the human with the Divine which is secured, not by physical compulsion, but by moral suasion and the methods which Omnipotent Love alone can employ. If all theory rules for the incompatibility of Divine Omnipotence and human free-



will, all experience confirms the verdict of practical life in its varied activities, that within the limits of our finite nature and its conditioned being we are free to do the will of God and free to refuse. Doing His will, we find that we act in accordance with the deepest and best needs of our nature and obey the laws of our inmost being. We experience in this a joy and a blessedness not otherwise obtainable, and we grow and develop into a personality so real as to suggest limitless possibilities of a higher becoming. The problem of the Divine transcendence and immanence, equally with the problem of human freedom and dependence, whilst theoretically insoluble, is practically solved in human experience in the reality of the Divine Grace men are conscious of receiving and their knowledge of their freedom to accept or reject it. The Divine Transcendence is our security that it is God that worketh in us ; the Divine Immanence is our assurance that in Him *we* live and move and have our being. The reception of *His* Grace proves our dependence, *our* reception proves our freedom. We receive His Life to make it our own by a free act which none the less is the response of a nature He so made as to fulfil the law of its being in that act and that act alone. So it is that, freely willing, we will in accordance with His will. He wills in us and through us since He made us. In virtue of His Immanent Grace it is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do according to His good pleasure. In virtue of the measure of freedom we have received from Him we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Hence the sublime paradox which is none the less a truth of Christian experience: *Deo servire regnare est.*

Pantheism fails to substantiate personality, human and Divine. Christian Theism is truer to human experience as we know it when it seeks to do justice to both.

We have contended for the absolute Sovereignty of God and a measure of human freedom. Does this mean that there is by God's permission an element of contingency in the working out of His eternal purpose ? A Christian philosophy may grant as much.

We may accept William James's idea of the universe as a

really dangerous and adventurous place, and regard it as Divinely constituted as a training school for the development of character. We are here for one purpose—viz. the achievement of something in the sphere of ethical and spiritual values, something, i.e., in the only sphere in which we have the guarantee that our work will abide. There must be room in the universe for free creative activity, the power of self-determination on the part of created creators, free within the limits of their created nature, environment, and gifts, and within the larger purpose of God for the well-being of all in the ultimate issue.

Is, then, the whole world-process foreseen and predetermined? The answer is that there can be *no* uncertainty concerning the final end, but *much* concerning the actual working out of the process.

One of the most helpful treatments of this problem will be found in Professor Ward's *Realm of Ends*, in which he repudiates the thought of the whole temporal order being like an infinite symphony which the Absolute knows at once, and in which therefore evolution is a kind of mere rehearsal *after* the symphony is composed. On the contrary, Professor Ward offers a *via media* which Christian Theism postulates:

"*All* is not decreed; the world is not created like a symphony. Again, *all* possibilities are *not* left open. The many have not severally unlimited freedom, that 'freedom of indifference' which is indistinguishable from chance. God's creatures are creators, the Pluralist maintains: their nature is partly His doing, partly their own: He assigns the talents, they use or misuse them. Not everything that is possible is possible to any, yet some initiative is open to everyone: none are left with no talent at all. The *total* possibilities, then, however far back we go, are fixed; but within these, contingencies, however far forward we go, are open."

It follows that God in one sense does not know what is going to happen in the world to-morrow, since the actions of created creators are within certain fixed limits within their own control and outside His by a self-limitation on His part. Yet He is above surprise. When He made us and gave us

the gift of limited freedom, He knew the utmost limits of the misuse to which that freedom could be put. He anticipated the worst that evil could do, and knew at the same time that evil's worst could not finally frustrate His eternal purpose. He is, therefore, equal to the worst that can happen, and adequate so to deal with it as to overrule it all to His glory and the achievement of His end. The certainty of His final victory He enables us to discern in the very nature of Good and Evil in human beings. He has so created us that Good has survival value, Evil has not. And the reason for this lies in His own Nature, which is Goodness. Hence Goodness in us, wherever achieved, partakes of the eternal and abiding.

Further, the exact course of the world's history is not fixed. There is an element of contingency. There may be and have been already delays, advances, and retreats. Goodness has received and may yet receive setbacks. The progress of the world has not been and need not be a uniform advance in ethical and spiritual achievement on the part of the sons of men. There have been and still may be temporary triumphs of Evil over Good.

Further, the achievement of His purpose is conditional upon our free co-operation with Him. It is within the power of men in any generation greatly to further or sadly to retard the progress of His Kingdom. Hence the summons to every age to a real conflict, a real enterprise, a great adventure in co-operation with Him against all that hinders and temporarily frustrates the final consummation of His purpose. Were we all in this age to bend our wills to His obedience and yield ourselves as willing servants to His will, there be some amongst us who should not taste of death till they had seen the Kingdom of God come with power.

It means, further, that the course of human history might have been so different, and that it lies within our power to make it in the future other than it has been. In this sense the sons of God are summoned to a great crusade, and to all men of good-will is the assurance never wholly absent from the religious consciousness that we are fighting on the winning

side. The victory is His already, and will be ours, notwithstanding the worst that evil can do.

In this way a Christian philosophy can attempt to show how, whilst the whole is determined, there is yet room for an element of contingency in the working out of the Divine plan. And we can see, moreover, why such should be the case. Moral and spiritual value attaches to our acts only in virtue of the fact that they are the result of self-conscious choice. True freedom is thus found in spiritual sonship, and the method of Omnipotent Love is to work in and through the sons of God. Hence, as Augustine put it, "Man without God cannot, God without man will not." *Qui fecit te sine te, non salvabit te sine te.* Whilst, then, we have "the melancholy power of baffling the Divine good-will," and may continue to do so possibly to our own eternal loss, God's purpose of Love for His creation cannot finally fail. He has all eternity in which to work and an infinite patience which must outlast our rebellious will.

In the light of the foregoing considerations, and with the reminder that the argument from analogy depends upon the amount of truth in the resemblance, we may, in conclusion, quote a brilliant illustration of Professor James's:

"Suppose two men before a chess-board, the one a novice, the other an expert player of the game. The expert intends to beat. But he cannot foresee exactly what any one actual move of his adversary may be. He knows, however, all the *possible* moves of the latter; and he knows in advance how to meet each of them by a move of his own which leads in the direction of victory. And the victory infallibly arrives, after no matter how devious a course, in the one predestined form of checkmate to the novice's king."

## CHAPTER VII

### MEANING AND VALUE OF FINITE INDIVIDUALITY

PLURALISM would make the finite Reals independent self-subsisting centres of activity—i.e. souls would be absolutely independent of God. Monism would make the finite a part or element or aspect or appearance of the Whole, and in some sense ultimately identical with or part of the Absolute—i.e. souls would be in some sense identical with or part of God and fulfil their true destiny in absorption into the Divine.

Christian Theism has to steer a mid-way course and endeavour to preserve on the one hand a measure of independence and self-determination in relation to God on the part of the finite spirit, and on the other hand to give a rational account of the seemingly inevitable dualism set up by such an assumption and which all Absolutist systems seek to solve ultimately by Pantheism.

A Christian philosophy must keep very close to the data of experience in its effort to solve the problem of the relation between the One and the Many.

Now, what is the verdict of empirical data in the face of this problem? We can appeal to experience generally and to religious experience in particular.

No one has dealt more fully and clearly with this subject than Dr. Hastings Rashdall, and we cannot do better than indicate his points, which are set out in an admirable Essay on "Personality: Human and Divine," in the volume of Oxford Essays entitled *Personal Idealism*.

He fixed upon one supreme fallacy in Hegelian thought which is fatal to any attempt to vindicate the ultimate reality and independence in any sense of the finite soul—a fallacy



which may be detected in system after system of modern philosophical speculation.

It is the assumption that "what constitutes existence for others is the same as what constitutes existence for self." The fallacy, i.e., of assuming that "a *thing* is as it is known: its *esse* is to be known: what it is for the experience of spirits is its whole reality: it is that and nothing more."

Once grant this assumption and we cut the ground from under any claim of ultimate existence in itself for finite human personality. If our existence consists in our being known, if the reality of our finite individuality is to be found in the experience of the Absolute, then we are lost. There was no more powerful advocate for individualism in this connexion than Dr. Rashdall, who sought to defend the following position:

"The *esse* of a person is to know himself, to be for himself, to feel and to think for himself, to act on his own knowledge, and to know that he acts. In dealing with persons, therefore, there is an unfathomable gulf between knowledge and reality. What a person is for himself is entirely unaffected by what he is for any other, so long as he does not know what he is for that other. No knowledge of that person by another, however intimate, can ever efface the distinction between the mind as it is for itself, and the mind as it is for another. The essence of a person is not what he is for another, but what he is for himself. It is there that his *principium individuationis* is to be found—in what he is, when looked at from the inside. . . .

"All the fallacies of our anti-individualist thinkers," says Dr. Rashdall, "come from talking as though the essence of a person lay in what can be known about him, and not in his own knowledge, his own experience of himself. And that, in turn, arises largely from the assumption that knowledge, without feeling or will, is the whole of Reality."

Now, if this position can be maintained we have a most powerful bulwark against all pantheistic tendencies to absorb the finite self in a larger experience, to merge finite individuality in an All-inclusive consciousness.

"My toothache is for ever my toothache only, and can never become yours." If this is true, then each finite self as a centre of experience mirrors the universe in an unique and

incommunicable way. My experience is mine. Others, by sympathy, may enter into it and to this extent claim to share it, but their knowledge of it and my knowledge are two distinct and distinguishable things, nor can they ever become identical.

Now, if the reality of the self is not exhausted in its relations with other selves, even though the development of the self be wholly conditioned by its relationships—i.e. the Non-Ego, including other selves and God—it follows that no matter how we may go out of our self in intimate relations with Another, we can never be so wholly lost in the relationship as to abandon the reality of what we are in ourselves. We are created and derive our being from God. He may know us through and through, and His knowledge of us may be a deeper and profounder knowledge of our true self than we ourselves possess, but it remains true, nonetheless, that our reality is not God's knowledge of it, but something other than Himself—viz. our own self-knowledge as a subject of experience.

It is quite conceivable that God may feel what I feel and experience my experience, but not in the sense that when I feel what I feel and God feels my feeling there is a resultant one feeling, a resultant one experience. There is not. There are two feelings, two experiences. *His and Mine.*

This whole line of thought, which is what Dr. Rashdall tried to establish, if I understand him aright, is crucial for the reality of finite individuality. I am I and He is He. I am therefore for ever separate from God with a measure of uniqueness bestowed indeed upon me by Him in the act of Creation, but once bestowed not even God Himself can override it.

The publication of Professor Pringle-Pattison's Gifford Lectures and the subsequent Symposium of the Aristotelian Society on the question, Do finite individuals possess a substantive or an adjectival mode of being? have served a valuable end in making clear the real issues at stake for Theism in the persistent deprecation of finite individuality detected in the philosophy of Mr. Bradley and Professor Bosanquet. The issue raised is vital for a Christian philosophy of Personality, Human and Divine. We cannot too highly appreciate

the searching analysis of Professor Bosanquet's Gifford Lectures (*Value and Destiny of the Individual*), which Professor Pringle-Pattison has given us in Lectures XIV–XV of his book (*The Idea of God*), and in his subsequent paper at the Aristotelian Society in the discussion which arose as the result of the clearly defined issue between Absolutism and Christian Theism on this point.

The issue was indicated by Professor Pringle-Pattison in these terms:

“The question is whether finite individuals possess a substantive or an adjectival mode of being—whether, that is to say, they must be taken as substances in the Aristotelian sense of *πρώτη οὐσία*, that which cannot stand in a judgment as predicate or attribute of anything else, the individual thing or being, in short, of which we predicate the universals which constitute its nature.”

There is no question, of course, that we have suffered in the past from what Professor Bosanquet calls “irrational Personalism,” and he is right in his protest against that extreme individualism which tends to regard the personal self as “an exclusive entity, simply living out a nature of its own.”<sup>1</sup> We do not teach an exaggerated individualism of “one lone man in an atheistic universe,” and we must be on our guard against Dr. McTaggart's concept of the finite Real, the absolute independence, suggested by the concept of the self as “a substance existing in its own right.” Dr. Bosanquet is right in reminding us that “we approach the study of finite self-conscious creatures, prepared to find in them the fragments of a vast continuum.”<sup>2</sup> We have to remember that, as Professor Pringle-Pattison puts it, “historically the individual is organic to society,” and so “in a still larger philosophical reference the individual is organic to a universal life or world, of which he is similarly a focus, an organ or expression.” In Bergson's words—*Nous ne nous tenons jamais tout entiers*—“We never possess ourselves entirely.” This is what Bosanquet means when he insists that “the finite self, like every-

<sup>1</sup> *Value and Destiny*, pp. 32–3.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

thing in the universe, is now and here beyond escape an element in the Absolute,"<sup>1</sup> and Professor Pringle-Pattison translates this into theological language as meaning that "no act of creation is conceivable or possible which should extrude us from the life of God and place us, as solitary units, outside the courses of His being." This, as he reminds us, is the presupposition of all divine visitations of grace and the possibility of our becoming, through redemption, a new creature in Christ Jesus. It is this "indwelling in a larger life"—the fact that we are "open to all the influences of the universe," having our being in something which is larger and vaster than ourselves—which is the key to the concept of the finite individuality as something other than finite. If we are thus "rooted in a wider life," if in God "we live, and move, and have our being," then we can account for the presence of the Ideal within us.

"Man is by contrast," says Pringle-Pattison, "a finite-infinite being, conscious of finitude only through the presence of an infinite nature within him." This is the old ontological argument of Descartes. It gives us ground for our belief that Values are of the very structure of Reality.

"The presence of the Ideal is the reality of God within us."<sup>2</sup> Hence "the ideal is precisely the most real thing in the world: and those ranges of our experience, such as religion, which are specifically concerned with the ideal, instead of being created as a cloud-cuckoo-land of subjective fancy, may reasonably be accepted as the best interpreters we have of the true nature of reality."<sup>3</sup>

It is well in this connexion to recall to mind Mr. Bradley's emphatic testimony to the validity and objective reference of religious experience:

"There is nothing more real," he says, "than what comes in religion . . . the man who demands a reality more solid than that of the religious consciousness knows not what he seeks."<sup>4</sup>

We are not, then, isolated units. The presence of ideals of

<sup>1</sup> *Value and Destiny*, p. 257. <sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 246. <sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 251-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 449.

Truth, Beauty, Goodness, witnesses to the fact that man's being is rooted in a larger life—a Reality transcendent above him and immanent within him.

This does not mean, however, that we are simply the organs of a Divine life or the pipes of a cosmic symphony.

It is an undoubted fact that the presence of an ideal within us has no meaning unless we have made it our own by a self-conscious appropriation. There must be the activity of the finite individual in self-identification with the larger life and the nobler purpose, if we are in any sense to be used as channels of grace.

This is fundamental for the preservation of the truth of the relative but real measure of self-determination and freedom on the part of the finite individual in relation both to the universe in which he is and the God whom he worships.

Once we lose hold upon or weaken our grasp of this truth we fall into Pantheism and are ready to adopt the phraseology of those who, like Mr. Bosanquet, make a special point of speaking of the finite self as an "element" in the Absolute.

Professor Pringle-Pattison draws attention to this phraseology and its significance in the writings of Bradley and Bosanquet.<sup>1</sup>

"As Mr. Bradley talks of the finite self as being 'embraced and harmonized' in the Absolute through its being 'suppressed as such,' so Professor Bosanquet speaks of 'the expansion and absorption of the self.'"

With more audacious irony Mr. Bradley speaks of the perfection and harmony which the individual attains in the Absolute as "the complete gift and dissipation of his 'personality' in which 'he, as such, must vanish.' . . ."

"'Transmuted' is the word favoured by both; but synonyms plentifully scattered through *Appearance and Reality* are 'merged,' 'blended,' 'fused,' 'absorbed,' 'run together,' 'transformed,' 'dissolved in a higher unity,' and even the more sinister terms 'suppressed,' 'destroyed,' and 'lost.'"

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 281.



It is clear that the adjectival theory of finite individuality is not simply "the denial of unrelated reals." Phraseology such as Mr. Bradley and Professor Bosanquet insist on using clearly implies that in their view "finite individuality" has no intrinsic value such as would justify our claiming permanence for it in the ultimate issue. The main purpose of finite individuality lies in the contribution it can make to the values which survive in the Absolute. When its contribution is made, the finite real has no more significance: it is not an end in itself but a means, a channel, an instrument. Individuality is not an end in itself, but its meaning lies in its "contribution" to the Whole.

Professor Pringle-Pattison draws attention to the fact that Professor Bosanquet carefully avoids the term "member" and pointedly substitutes the phrase "element" when speaking of the relation between the self and the Absolute.

What is the significance of this? Simply, as Professor Pringle-Pattison says, because "the idea of membership suggests another conception of the nature and function of individuation than that which dominates Mr. Bradley's and Professor Bosanquet's metaphysics."

"Element in the Absolute": "Member of a Community." Here we have the difference. "Parts of an Impersonal Whole": "Souls in relationship to a Personal God." Here we detect the issue at stake.

Does our value lie in the "contribution" we make to the Whole? Granted that it does: the question, then, is: What is our contribution? The Christian answer is "Ourselves."

God values not my gifts but myself. Love loves the giver and the gift, not for its value, but as the expression of a relationship between Giver and Receiver.

Here at last we reach the meaning and value of the finite individuality. It consists in its relationship to Another. Relationship is of the very texture of Reality. Our end is not final absorption or annihilation, because if it were so relationship between ourselves and the Absolute would cease. We are not dealing with an Impersonal Something for which relation-

ship has no meaning and communion no reality. We cannot express the thought better than in Professor Pringle-Pattison's words :

" It takes two only to make a bargain ; it takes two to love and to be loved, two to worship and to be worshipped, and many combined in a common purpose to form a society or a people. . . . As in the love of man and woman, as in a great friendship the completest identification of interests and aims does not merge the friends in one ; the most perfect *alter* ego must remain an *alter* if the experience is to exist, if the joy of an intensified life is to be tasted at all." <sup>1</sup>

Now apply this to the relationship between the soul and God. If we are mere modes of the Divine Being, phases of the Divine Life, parts of the One Substance, where is the place for worship, communion, prayer, intercourse, relationship ?

" The religious attitude—all that we mean by worship, adoration, self-surrender—is wholly impossible, if the selves are conceived as telephone wires along which the Absolute acts or thinks. . . .

" That sublime acquiescence, that ardour of self-identification with the spirit of the universe, is possible only to beings who are more than mere modes of a Divine substance—whose prerogative it rather is to become the sons of God." <sup>2</sup>

" I note the common refuge of semi-pluralist reasonings in admitting that finite individuals are inter-related, but only *in some degree* determined by inter-relatedness. To me this seems an evasion." So Professor Bosanquet expresses his disapproval of a position short of Pluralism with its unrelated reals, and he refers to Professor Pringle-Pattison,<sup>3</sup> Professor Stout,<sup>4</sup> and Professor Parker,<sup>5</sup> as upholders of the *via media*. This is crucial for the theistic position of the finite in relation to God. We claim a real freedom in some measure over against the Whole.

<sup>1</sup> p. 289.

<sup>2</sup> p. 291.

<sup>3</sup> *Idea of God*, p. 274.

<sup>4</sup> p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> *Self and Nature*, p. 246 ff.

"It is meant to suggest," says Professor Bosanquet, "a crowd of co-ordinate individual reals, like Herbart's, entering into relations which are secondary to their private being. But these co-ordinate reals are pure assumptions. There is nothing in experience to suggest drawing a line between inter-relatedness and non-relatedness: and the plain fact is that of super- and subordinate reals."

We should say that there is nothing in experience to suggest unrelated reals and everything to suggest inter-relatedness.

Professor Bosanquet and Professor Pringle-Pattison would both accept the term adjectival; to the one, however, it means subordination, to the other co-ordination—the difference being further accentuated by Professor Bosanquet's defining subordination as "the character of being something which has its main being and value as a qualification of a whole which includes it."<sup>1</sup> (Professor Stout deals further with this point, *Symposium*, p. 133.) What is the "teleological status of finite spirits in the universe"? Professor Bosanquet says he rejected the term "membership" because he thought it would commit him to the idea of "eternal substances, differentiations of the absolute, identified with finite selves." He could not bring himself to hold "finite selves to be necessarily eternal or everlasting units."

Professor Pringle-Pattison's view that the chief end and aim of the Absolute is the development of or into finite spirits is rejected. "I cannot believe," says Professor Bosanquet, "that the supreme end of the Absolute is to give rise to beings such as I experience myself to be."

Discussing the crucial problem of human freedom, Professor Bosanquet is right when he says "it is only in a will above my own that I can find my own will and my freedom and independence." But he adds a significant comment: "Here, again, it is only by acknowledging myself adjectival and under necessity that I can become substantive and free."

"A man is free," he tells us, "in so far as he wills the universal object. The reason is obvious. It is only what is universal that is free from self-contradiction. It is only what

<sup>1</sup> *Symposium*, p. 85.

is free from self-contradiction that can be willed without obstruction."

Granted the familiar paradox so true in the moral and spiritual life where we apprehend true freedom only in obedience to the will of Him *cui servire regnare est*, the point is that the act of subordination in obedience is our voluntary act, a free self-determination only possible in a being free to self-determine itself, i.e. in a finite centre of free creative activity, what we are contending for when we postulate a substantive and not an adjectival self in relation to God.

If this be not so, we have no explanation of the facts of sin and evil. The existence of Will in the individual is the crux of the position. How can we be found in opposition to God unless we be free to be so?

"How can I take up this attitude of opposition" (asks Pringle-Pattison, replying to Bosanquet<sup>1</sup>) "if I have not some kind of existence over against the spirit of the whole, if there is not some otherness in the relation between us? . . . the surrender of the selfish will implies the power to assert it: where is the merit or value in the self-surrender if the whole process is a make-believe on the part of the Absolute? If the Absolute is the only agent in the case, how can it will anything *but* the universal?"

The fact is that "belief in the relative independence of human personalities and belief in the existence of God as a living Being are bound up together. The reality of both God and man depends on the reality of the difference between them. Thus I interpret the meaning of creation."

There are other lines of thought which are worth recalling to mind as illustrative of this concept of the uniqueness of the finite individual. It is, for example, one of the strong points in the famous *Monadology* of Leibniz, who strove to maintain both the individuality of the Monads and their essential unity with God by means of the principle of continuity—what he called the "identity of indiscernibles."

The well-known challenge which Leibniz issued to the

<sup>1</sup> *Symposium*, p. 115.

Prussian courtiers to find two blades of grass alike in the sense of being identical serves to recall to our minds what is a conspicuous principle running through the whole Natural World, even though Science for its own purposes finds it necessary to ignore differences in the effort to classify specimens under ever wider genera.

The bewildering diversity of Nature, the fact that heterogeneity is its mark, is fundamental when we come to observe the same phenomenon in human life and to realize that no two persons are identical.

It is worth while in this connexion to quote an illuminating passage from *Christus Futurus*<sup>1</sup>:

"The spirit that gives life," Miss Dougall tells us, "only manifests itself in individuality. This is seen in vegetable and animal life; in human life the individual difference is greatest. We are told that there are no two germs, no two blades of grass alike: this appals the mind and gives dignity to the dust. The use and beauty of this minute diversity we cannot comprehend; but we do know intuitively that humanity would cease to be human, and God cease to be God, if the mill of the universe could turn out two men in mind and heart and will the same. . . .

"Two little children who built their toy bricks always alike would destroy human hope. Two idiots whose senseless habits were alike; two men of genius who produced the same epic, the same oratorio, the same philosophy, . . . would pronounce our final doom. Gloom, endless gloom, would fall upon our hearts if the human duplicate were seen."

Now, what is the significance of this principle of heterogeneity when studied in connexion with finite individuality? Simply this, as it seems to me, that finite individuality as unique has value. We do right to prize our individuality. It is something which cannot be replaced.

Professor Sorley has brought this out very well in a passage I will quote from the recent Gifford Lectures<sup>2</sup>:

"A man prizes his own individuality, and resents any confusion with another self. 'Very nice young ladies they

<sup>1</sup> p. 317.

<sup>2</sup> *Moral Values and the Idea of God*, p. 113 ff.



both are,' said Admiral Croft, 'I hardly know one from the other'; but the young ladies would have resented this divided praise. 'Doubles' usually feel antagonistic to one another. When he is regarded simply as one of a class, as a specimen, a man feels himself robbed of his value; and he therefore sets store by everything which gives him a character of his own and marks him off from the rest of the world. Repetition, too, is distasteful to him, because this also is a generalizing of what he esteems as existing once for all. . . ."

Hence, as Dr. Sorley goes on to show, we dislike the thought that this life is a recurrence of cycles, that we may have to go through it all a second time. "Value," as he reminds us, "seems to be lost if the 'second turn' is a mere reduplication of the first. . . . When you repeat you generalize, and when you generalize you devalue."

Individuality, then, has value: its unique character has intrinsic worth as such. We may be thankful that the "human duplicate" has not been discovered. I am I and He is He. The day this ceases to be true and finite selves dissolve into one another, humanity may begin to sing its "Nunc dimittis." Something of value will be lost. The charm of life lies, surely, in its infinite variety, the glory of mankind in the absence of sameness, between James and John, Mary and Martha.

Now can we see a purpose in this principle? Can we attach higher values to a personality active in the sphere of the moral and the spiritual? If we accept the view-point of Jesus of Nazareth in His relationships with men, I think we can. And moreover we shall discover a profounder meaning in finite individuality if we strive to view it from His standpoint.

What is His standpoint? That of Love with its sympathetic, may we say, its intuitive insight, into a man's power of a higher becoming—its belief, therefore, in the possibilities of human nature. It is Jesus' theocentric thought of man which gives us the key of which we are in search. We have it in the story of the rich young ruler<sup>1</sup>: "Jesus, looking upon him, loved him." Love can discern in a man something which

<sup>1</sup> Mark x. 17-22.

escapes the less penetrating gaze of a crowd and so confounds the world's judgment and even the verdict of an intellectual-istic philosophical estimate or that of a scientific valuation. How beautifully this has been brought out in Dr. Glover's study *The Jesus of History*, ch. vi, "Jesus and Man"!

"It is worth noticing that Jesus stands alone in refusing to despair of the greater part of mankind. Contempt was in His eyes, the unpardonable sin<sup>1</sup> . . . the lost soul matters to God. He sums up His own work in the world in much the same language as He uses about the shepherd in the parable: The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost."<sup>2</sup>

"If, as Dr. D. S. Cairns puts it (writes Dr. Glover), 'Jesus Christ is the great believer in man,' it is—if we are reading him aright at all—because God believes in man." And, again:

"Can one out of fifteen hundred millions of human beings living on one planet matter to God, when there are so many planets and stars, and there have been so many generations? Can he matter? It all depends on how we conceive of God. Here it is essential to give all the meaning to the term 'God' that Jesus gave to it, to believe in God as Jesus believed in God, if we are to understand the fullness of Jesus' 'good news.' It all depends on God—on whether Jesus was right about God; and, after all, on Jesus Himself. 'A thing of price is man,' wrote Synesius about A.D. 410, 'because for him Christ died.' The two things go together—Jesus' death and Jesus' theocentric thought of man."

So far Dr. Glover, and it is beautifully put. It amounts to this, that if we accept Jesus' point of view, man in God's sight—in the sight of Omnipotent Love—is of infinite value. Why? Because "made in the image of God" the Creator discerns the infinite even in the meanest of the sons of men and believes in us because He knows what we are capable of becoming and what He can make us if we will but let Him. We draw out the best in people when we begin to believe in them. We begin to discern their value when we begin to love them. Dr. Glover aptly recalls for us a well-known

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xix. 10.

passage in Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*. "Man's unhappiness, as I construe," says Teufelsdröckh, "comes of his greatness; it is because there is an infinite in him, which with all his cunning he cannot quite bury under the finite. Will the whole Finance Ministers and Upholsterers and Confectioners of modern Europe undertake in joint-stock company to make one shoeblack happy?"

The question is thought-provoking and the answer, surely, in the negative. Why? Because even a shoeblack has a soul, and this constitutes his unique value in the eyes of our Heavenly Father who "calleth His own sheep by name."

We move a stage further when we come to consider the relationship of the soul to God. Here the verdict of religious experience is decisive against all attempts to deprecate the meaning and value of finite individuality. Here, if anywhere, we rest our claim to intrinsic worth and permanence. The relationship between the soul and God, God and the soul in communion is at once the guarantee of (a) our uniqueness, and (b) our worth. Why? Because we dare to believe that our relationship, *my* particular relationship, intercourse, communion with God, is irreplaceable. No other finite individual self is related to God in this sense in identically the same way. That is to say, that if another soul could conceivably be in my relationship to God it must be myself reduplicated, which it cannot be. I am I, and my relationship to God is *my* relationship and not another's. We dare further to believe that He values my communion with Him because of His love to me. In this lies my intrinsic worth. Not that I am of value in or for or to myself. This were Egoism run mad. My worth lies in His valuation. This is my justification for claiming a value and a permanence for myself which otherwise I dare not presume to cherish.

But all the world's coarse thumb  
And finger failed to plumb,  
So passed in making up the main account;  
All instincts immature,  
All purposes unsure,  
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's account.

“ Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act,  
Fancies that broke through language and escaped ;  
All I could never be,  
All men ignored in me,  
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Dr. Mozley has put the thought beautifully in a pregnant sentence: “ Mankind is *all mass to the human eye, and all individual to the Divine.*”<sup>1</sup>

We may still further elucidate this principle of the uniqueness of individuals if we appeal to human experience, both in relation to other persons and to God.

However possible or desirable it may be in a democratic age to consider men in the mass or to legislate for the whole, we can never forget the indubitable fact that each man must grow and develop from his own roots, and that character, whatever it may owe to circumstances and environment in its development, is ultimately the result of the activity of the Self. We are the masters of our inner sanctuary. Each man, each child, has a soul to be educated, a life to be developed, and no State legislation or outside pressure is of the least avail apart from the activity, the self-determination of the living Ego of each individual man or woman. If this is true of the æsthetic and the intellectual life, it is pre-eminently true of the moral and the spiritual life. All moral and spiritual progress is dependent upon a battle we fight ourselves, each one. No circumstances, however favourable, no Divine Grace, however powerful, is of any avail to dispense us from the task of self-development. It has well been said that we can never be lost in the mass and float with it, in some easy stream towards a haven of righteousness. Each life has a separate relation to God, a separate course to follow, a destiny to fulfil. Each individual possesses gifts, be it but the one talent or the five—no one is devoid of all talents, nor is the talent in one life exactly what it is in another. Each one has hopes, aspirations, desires, responsibilities, and is singly tried, proved,

<sup>1</sup> *Univ. Sermons*, p. 121, sermon on “ War,” quoted in Pringle-Pattison, p. 268.

crowned, and blessed, or disowned at the last as an individual. We may be saved in the body, and as a member of the body, but it remains true, none the less, that no two experiences of salvation in the vast body of redeemed humanity can ever be identical, and no two persons' trial and testing in temptation are ever the same in the sense of being identically alike. Hence our inability to take credit for the goodness of others or offer as a substitute for our own the piety of our parents. It is so in all the crises of life. We must pass through the experience with the sympathy, the prayers, the advice, the assistance, the love of others, but none the less alone. There is a passage in Browning's *Paracelsus* which illustrates this point:

PARACELSUS: "Are there not, Festus, are there not, dear Michal,  
Two points in the adventure of a diver,  
One—when a beggar, he prepares to plunge,  
One—when a prince, he rises with his pearl?  
Festus, I plunge!"

FESTUS: "We wait you when you rise!"

Now, the point is this: What happens under the water is known to God and the diver. The diver's experience is unshareable by any save himself. So in the great crises of life; the thing that opens our eyes to Reality is just this awful isolation of the self—the sorrow none can share, the dark night in which we are alone, the sin which is essentially mine, my fault, my own fault, my own most grievous fault, the sense of guilt, that awful guardian of my personal identity (as Inge puts it). Individually we are baptized, individually we partake of the Heavenly Manna, though we kneel in the Presence and as members of a great multitude, whom no man can number. "O God, Thou art my God," is still our cry—God and the Soul, the Soul and God—two great realities, two beings in the whole universe. And if this isolation of the self in the midst of its manifold relatedness to others and to God be true of life, it is pre-eminently true of the culminating crisis of life when we come to the gate of death. Watch a dying person and we are in the presence of a trial we cannot



share with them. We are onlookers at a struggle which the dying person must go through each for himself.

Why should we faint and fear to live alone,  
Since all alone we die ?  
Not e'en the tenderest heart and next our own  
Knows half the reasons why we smile and sigh.

Thus does life and its crises bear out the principle of the uniqueness of the finite individuality of each self and the Divine appeal is never to the mass but to the individual man. The Divine Voice is heard in the depths of the individual soul and the summons answered by each one as an individual response.

Mankind is "*all mass to the human eye, and all individual to the Divine.*"

So we reach again the question of Personal Immortality.

## CHAPTER VIII

### IMMORTALITY AND RESURRECTION

#### I

THE Dean of St. Paul's has on several occasions recently been reminding us that *the* book on the problem of immortality has yet to be written. It is now more than a quarter of a century since Salmond published his *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, and much advance has been made in different departments of thought and research since that time. We have now to reckon not only with scientific materialism but with psychology, old and new ; we have neo-vitalism and the reaction against Darwinism ; we have the science of comparative religion and the psychology of religious experience ; we have the fuller critical treatment of historic records in the sphere of Christian evidences, and the attacks upon the historicity and evidential value of the Gospel narratives of the Resurrection ; there is, moreover, the growth of a mass of hardly digested data in connexion with psychic phenomena and the philosophico-religious movements popularized under the names of "Theosophy," "Christian Science," and "Spiritism." We have still with us the revolt against Protestant conceptions of the life after death ; the repudiation of the old-fashioned and crudely materialistic ideas centring around the conceptions of "Heaven" and "Hell." There is, moreover, to-day the quickened sense in our midst of "communion with the Unseen," and the revival of "Prayers for the Dead" in our churches. There is, again, a greater eagerness for knowledge concerning the possibility of a future life and wistful questions concerning the state of the departed due to the appalling losses in human life, and the fact that for

many, as the result of the Great War, life's pilgrimage must be henceforth a lonely one with a bereavement at the heart of it. All this has led to a desire to believe and a willingness to snatch at any "evidence" which seems to lend countenance to what the heart most longs to be true.

Generally speaking, there is a more widespread inclination towards belief in a life after death, and in the minds of men a vague idea that scientific research and advancing knowledge are tending more to give a verdict in favour of the heart's desire, and in any case have not conclusively demonstrated the impossibility of survival after bodily death.

We have to-day a growing output of books dealing with various aspects of the problem, and the time is undoubtedly ripening for something in the nature of a tentative synthesis of conflicting ideas, positive and negative, to be gleaned from the various fields of research opened up for us in biology, psychology, philosophy, and religion.

We propose to review the problem in some of its aspects, and to indicate one or two directions in which a solution may be tentatively sought.

## II

A perusal of Professor Unamuno's stimulating volume *The Tragic Sense of Life in Men and in Peoples* shows us that he frankly despairs of finding any intellectual justification for a belief in immortality. He quotes Hume's words in the essay "On the Immortality of the Soul" as showing that, in the opinion of that philosopher, there is no rational proof of the soul's being immortal, and, in spite of Kant's attempt, Unamuno is convinced that the sceptical affirmation of Hume holds good. There is no way, he tells us quite frankly, of proving the immortality of the soul rationally. There are, on the other hand, ways of proving rationally its mortality. Hence an incisive chapter on what he aptly describes as "the rationalist dissolution" in which he faces the very worst that reason can urge against belief, exposes the feebleness of the arguments by which believers

have sought to bolster up their faith in immortality, and dismisses them as mere "advocacy and sophistry."

"All the laboured arguments," he says, "in support of our hunger of immortality, which pretend to be grounded on reason or logic, are merely advocacy and sophistry."

"The property and characteristic of advocacy is, in effect, to make use of logic in the interests of a thesis that is to be defended, while, on the other hand, the strictly scientific method proceeds from the facts, the data, presented to us by reality, in order that it may arrive, or not arrive, as the case may be, at a certain conclusion. What is important is to define the problem clearly, whence it follows that progress consists not seldom in undoing what has been done. Advocacy always supposes a *petitio principii*, and its arguments are *ad probandum*. And theology that pretends to be rational is nothing but advocacy."

Hence on these lines the breakdown of theology.

"Take," he says, "the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas, the classical monument of the theology—that is, of the advocacy—of Catholicism, and open it where you please. First comes the thesis—*utrum* . . . whether such a thing be thus or otherwise; then the objections—*ad primum sic proceditur*; next the answers to these objections—*sed contra est* . . . or *respondeo dicendum*. . . . Pure advocacy! And underlying many, perhaps most, of its arguments you will find a logical fallacy which may be expressed *more scholastico* by this syllogism: I do not understand this fact save by giving it this explanation; it is thus that I must understand it; therefore this must be its explanation. The alternative being that I am left without any understanding of it at all. True science teaches, above all, to doubt and to be ignorant; advocacy neither doubts nor believes that it does not know. It requires a solution."<sup>1</sup>

There can then be no compromise between reason and faith. We are not to believe in order to understand.

"Science as a substitute for religion and reason as a substitute for faith have always fallen to pieces. Science will be able to satisfy, and in fact does satisfy in an increasing measure, our increasing logical or intellectual needs, our desire to know

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 91-2, 92-3.

and understand the truth ; but science does not satisfy the needs of our heart and of our will, and, far from satisfying our hunger for immortality, it contradicts it. Rational truth and life stand in opposition to one another. And is it possible that there is any other truth than rational truth ? ” <sup>1</sup>

What is the conclusion to which Professor Unamuno would drive us ? Let us answer the question in his own words :

“ It must remain established, therefore, that reason—human reason—within its limits, not only does not prove rationally that the soul is immortal or that the human consciousness shall preserve its indestructibility through the tracts of time to come, but that it proves rather—within its limits, I repeat—that the individual consciousness cannot persist after the death of the physical organism upon which it depends. And these limits, within which I say that human reason proves this, are the limits of rationality, of what is known by demonstration. Beyond these limits is the irrational, which, whether it be called the super-rational or the infra-rational or the contra-rational, is all the same thing. Beyond these limits is the absurd of Tertullian, the impossible of the *certum est, quia impossibile est*. And this absurd can only base itself upon the most absolute uncertainty. The rational dissolution ends in dissolving reason itself ; it ends in the most absolute scepticism, in the phenomenalism of Hume or in the doctrine of absolute contingencies of Stuart Mill, the most consistent of the Positivists. The supreme triumph of reason, the analytical—that is, the destructive and dissolvent—faculty, is to cast doubt upon its own validity. . . . Absolute relativism, which is neither more nor less than scepticism, in the modern sense of the term, is the supreme triumph of the reasoning reason.” <sup>2</sup>

It is not then a case of *Credo ut intelligam* but *Credo quia absurdum* ! The efforts to rationalize our beliefs, however well-intentioned, are futile. The reasonableness of Christianity is a vain quest. Hence “ Scepticism, uncertainty—the position to which reason, by practising its analysis upon itself, upon its own validity, at last arrives—is the

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 103-4, 105.



foundation upon which the heart's despair must build up its hope." <sup>1</sup> So the ex-Rector of the University of Salamanca introduces us to the "tragic sense of life," due to the strife between enemy truths. Salvador de Madariaga tells us in his introductory essay to this English translation of *Del Sentimiento Trágico de la Vida*, that "this strife between enemy truths, the truth thought and the truth felt, or, as he himself puts it, between veracity and sincerity, is Unamuno's *raison d'être*."

"Thus Unamuno leads us to his inner deadlock: his reason can rise no higher than scepticism, and, unable to become vital, dies sterile; his faith, exacting anti-rational affirmations and unable therefore to be apprehended by the logical mind, remains incommunicable. From the bottom of this abyss Unamuno builds up his theory of life. . . . It is on the survival of his will to live, after all the onslaughts of his critical intellect, that he finds the basis for his belief—or rather for his effort to believe. Self-compassion leads to self-love, and this self-love, founded as it is on a universal conflict, widens into love of all that lives and therefore wants to survive. So, by an act of love, springing from our own hunger for immortality, we are led to give a conscience to the Universe—that is, to create God. Such is the process by which Unamuno, from the transcendental pessimism of his inner contradiction, extracts an everyday optimism founded on love." <sup>2</sup>

We have outlined Unamuno's position at sufficient length to enable it to be seen that he is thoroughgoing in his anti-intellectualist attitude, and that for him the way of the will and the emotions, the response not of intellect but of the whole life in a living experience, is the way to apprehend the reality we seek. Unamuno is himself the living embodiment of that hunger for immortality which he conceives to be the characteristic of the normal man. Personal immortality is for him the *summum bonum*. For this he lives, and all else is subsidiary. From it, and presumably only because of it, comes belief in God. As we read our author, we are caught away by his fiery rhetoric, his passionate affirmations,

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. xvii.

his full-blooded enthusiasm. Here is the "will to believe" with a vengeance. Here also the "will to be immortal," and if *willing* can secure the end so ardently desired, Unamuno himself deserves to get it.

Nevertheless, in spite of all the fierce indictment against reason, we in the West at any rate cannot so easily rule out intellectual consideration of the problem. Granted that the starting-point is the man of flesh and bone, very much in earnest with a "furious hunger of being" and "an appetite for divinity," unable to conceive himself as non-existing, yet tormented by a thousand reasons urged by science against the possibility of life outliving its material accompaniment and the scientific demonstration that the withdrawal of the oxygen supply to the brain means in a few seconds the cessation of consciousness—why is it necessary to repudiate reason in the effort to preserve the desire to live? Are the conclusions of materialistic science so decisive as to leave no room for faith? Here surely the latest results of scientific investigation will help us to escape in some measure from the black pessimism with which Unamuno regards the arguments of physiologists and psychologists. This is a point to which we will return at a later stage, but for the moment we press our previous question—Must we be irrational of necessity in order to believe? Unamuno may be right in his contention that Spain has its message for the Western world, and Quixotism as he conceives it may yet teach us all a lesson, but "West is West," and he will never persuade the English-speaking peoples, with their practical outlook upon life and their fund of common sense and native suspicion of mystics true or false, to abandon the path of sane reason in the search after ultimate reality. To do so is at once to put a premium upon superstition and to pander to credulity in its worst form. Even if there be no way of proving the immortality of the soul rationally, that is no reason why we should refuse to be guided by the little light, dim though it may be, which reason offers. The fact is that there is no purely intuitional and no purely rational activity in human experience. The activity all through is that of the whole complex per-

sonality in which now the intuitive and now the rational element may predominate. Faith's leap surely comes at the end of the intellectual quest where reason halts, and it is not necessary at the commencement of the journey to repudiate reason in order to find room for faith as our guide. In any case we turn our backs upon reason at our own peril, and the risk is too great.

The questions we have to ask in these days rather are these :

(1) Are the arguments which are put forward on physiological and psychological grounds against belief in the survival of the soul after bodily death in any sense conclusive ?

(2) Are we in a stronger position to-day to rebut scientific materialism than was the case, say, in the days of Darwin, Huxley, and the nineteenth-century scientific revolution ?

We venture to think that there is much in present tendencies in thought and scientific research to warrant an affirmative answer to the second question, and a negative answer to the first.

### III

Earl Balfour, in his Presidential Address to the British Association, has reminded us that we know far too much nowadays about matter to be materialists, and from biology itself comes a message frankly repudiating the scientific materialism of the nineteenth century. We are familiar enough with the arguments of materialistic psychology on the relation of mind to brain, soul to body ; but do they afford a conclusive refutation of immortality ? It may be true that, so far as any evidence we have or can ever have is concerned, the death of the body is the end also of the soul. Destroy the brain and the mind goes too. We may admit that in spite of the claims put forward as the result of the investigations of psychical phenomena, we have not at present and may never possess conclusive demonstration of the survival of the soul after bodily death. We are not bound, however, to conclude that consciousness is an epiphenomenon of cerebral activity, an accompaniment of the physical and chemical changes which

occur in the brain. No such conclusive and inevitable deduction need follow, and in fact there are other hypotheses which are equally legitimate, which point to no such conclusion, and in favour of which much more can be said in this twentieth century than was possible a hundred, fifty, or even ten years ago.

Psycho-physical materialism would reduce consciousness to a by-product of physiological processes, and there will always be people for whom this explanation is satisfactory ; but an idealistic interpretation of matter in terms of mind, rather than mind in terms of matter, is at least as legitimate, and Bergson's psychological treatment of the problem in *Matter and Memory* leaves room for the hypothesis that the life-principle which uses the brain as a kind of motor organ may quite reasonably be conceived to be prior to the matter through which it functions. In this case the disintegration of the brain means simply the breakdown of the instrument, not the extinction of the life ; and, however intimately mind and brain may seem to us to be united and indissolubly one, there is no conclusive *a priori* reason against mind surviving the loss of its instrument—the brain mechanism—and manufacturing for itself another instrument for use in the new environment in which presumably it may find itself after "death." The proof that it succeeds in doing so is yet to seek, unless we are prepared to rely upon such "evidence" as the spiritists offer, and the extremely hazardous "conclusions by analogy" drawn from "telepathy." But he would be a bold man to-day who would affirm that such an hypothesis was ruled out by the known facts, and that progress to-day in physiological and psychological investigation was leading to a gradual verification of the mechanistic theory of life. On the contrary, we are able to quote no less an authority than Dr. J. S. Haldane for the opposite conclusion. "The phenomena of life are of such a nature that no physical or chemical explanation of them is remotely conceivable." And again :

"The idea of life is nearer to reality than the ideas of matter and energy, and therefore the presupposition of ideal biology is that inorganic can ultimately be resolved into organic

phenomena, and that the physical world is thus only the appearance of a deeper reality which is as yet hidden from our distinct vision and can only be seen dimly with the eye of scientific faith." <sup>1</sup>

The "tragic sense of life," then, arising from despair at reason's assaults upon all we hold by instinct as most precious and vital, is more likely to be relieved than further accentuated by the progress of scientific investigation in physiology and psychology so far as these seek to throw light upon the problem of Immortality. In this case we think that Professor de Unamuno will have been found to have been too pessimistic in his conclusions regarding the verdict of science against his cherished belief, and too hasty in his repudiation of reason as refuting conclusively what on other grounds he has come to believe as vital to his very life, viz. its survival.

The conclusive proof from materialism, then, is wanting. Scientific investigation returns an open verdict. We are free to endeavour to reach an assurance of immortality by other avenues of approach if such are available.

Strictly speaking, science is incapable of giving any decisive verdict upon the question. Its method is purely descriptive, and its function is to supply from its comparatively restricted fields of research data for the study of the problem. It remains for philosophy and theology to discuss the deeper and more fundamental questions which arise from a consideration of the ultimate meaning and purpose of human life. A scientific description of nature, animate and inanimate, is one thing; an interpretation of its meaning is another. To such an interpretation reason must bring all its resources and strive to extend the concept of intelligibility to the whole. But a failure to exhibit rationality in every department may be due to the fact that reason has its limits. Its lamp may guide us along the way up to a certain point—the limits of rationality. Beyond these limits we may have to yield ourselves to another guide in the quest after the discovery of ultimate reality. A conclusive intellectual proof of the existence of the Author of nature may be lacking, but reason

<sup>1</sup> *Mechanism, Life, and Personality*, pp. 64 and 104-5, second ed.



itself may urge us to infer His Presence as the adequate cause of such rationality as scientific investigation has revealed to us in nature. If, where reason halts, faith takes its leap into the Beyond—outside the limits of rationality—such a leap is taken at the dictation of reason itself, and in this sense whilst we must describe it as irrational, it need not be in the bad sense of that term. It may be that the supreme justification for faith's activity is to be found in instinctive reason which urges us to go beyond itself in the endeavour to discover the hidden country beyond its own confines. Faith's convictions may not be reached along scientific lines, but, nonetheless, they may be the true key to the interpretation of much which scientific investigation has revealed to us in the way of suggestions of a purpose and end, the presence of an unseen but very potent factor in the processes of nature itself.

Some such conclusion is suggested to us in the summing-up of his survey of *The System of Animate Nature*, by Dr. J. A. Thomson,<sup>1</sup> when he tells us that we cannot reach any religious truth or conviction along scientific lines, but that a careful scientific description of animate nature is not, in his opinion, inconsistent with a spiritual—i.e. a religious or philosophical—interpretation.

“Although some will not agree,” he says, “we hold it to be historically true that just as there is a science that knows Nature, so there is a religion that knows God ; and throughout our studies we have not concealed our conviction that it is unprofitable to pit against one another these two distinct ways of working towards truth. For they are not antithetic but complementary. Perhaps it would be well if the devotees of science were more aware of its limitations, perhaps it would be well if the religious who have the vision of God knew a little more about His works, but what must be sought after by both is a position from which haply there may be seen the unity of Huxley's science and Wordsworth's vision. The results of science must, we think, be taken up as ‘harmonious elements in a system of truth wider than themselves ; a system in whose wider light their ultimate significance for life, and for the

<sup>1</sup> Gifford Lectures, 1915-16.

meaning of life, would become manifest' (Blewett, 1907, p. 52)."<sup>1</sup>

Science, then, affords no conclusive evidence against belief in immortality; on the contrary, a careful study of the great steps in organic evolution and the ascent of man urges us to infer that the whole process must be in some sense purposive and for larger and vaster issues than are suggested by the limitations imposed upon finite spirits in a terrestrial existence.

"The process of evolution from invisible Biococci to Man-kind has a magnificence which cannot be exaggerated. It has been a process in which the time required has been of no consideration, in which there has been neither rest nor haste, in which bypaths show as much finish as the highways, in which broad foundations have been laid so that the superstructure has been secure, in which, in spite of the disappearance of masterpieces, there has been a conservation of big gains. It has had its outcome in personalities who have discerned its magnificent sweep, who are seeking to understand its factors, who are learning some of its lessons, who cannot cease trying to interpret it."

There will, however, be no interpretation from the intellectual standpoint so conclusive as to leave no room for reasonable doubt. Certainty concerning a future life cannot be given us either by scientific investigation or philosophical inference. The utmost we may expect from these sources is encouragement to belief, and this we think is more clearly forthcoming in the twentieth century as the result of further advances in knowledge than was the case a generation ago. We reach, then, this position: (1) Science and philosophy, whilst in some ways urging reason to conclude in favour of a future life, fail to give us intellectual certitude and conclusive demonstration; (2) that ultimately we are driven beyond the limits of the rational, and by faith must grope in the dim regions beyond these limits in our search for the truth we seek; (3) such a step by faith beyond the limits of rationality is itself justified by reason, and in this sense is eminently reasonable.

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Thomson, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 650.

The question, then, is whether simple faith brings us nearer to the truth than the intellectual quest. Are there other roads open where intellect fails us?

Professor Unamuno would contend strongly that there are. We agree that the way of faith is such a road, but we see no reason for a repudiation of intellect as the necessary condition of faith's activity. It is more probably true to say, that the real protest should be aimed against a false and exaggerated intellectualism which reaches its conclusions by living in a world of pure abstractions of its own making, and rigidly excluding from its domain a mass of data which our emotional and volitional life affords towards the solution of the problem. We need not, in fact, abandon ourselves to superstition and credulity when we seek to possess a reasoned faith. The truth is that if we exalt the intellectual activity as the sole and only criterion of judgment and rule out other criteria—the æsthetic and the moral—as purely relative and subjective, we are lost in the barren wastes of a false intellectualism. On the other hand, if we bring to bear upon the problem *the resources of our whole personality* in all its manifold activities, in response to the environment in which we find ourselves, we shall in all probability feel ourselves in closer touch with ultimate reality than would be the case if we sought to find it along the road of intellect only. In life itself, rather than in intellectual contemplation of it, the key to its secret is to be found. In a lived experience in which faith is active shall we know the truth in and through experience of it. It is in actual living that we feel by instinct that we shall continue to live. It is the feeling of our own personality that makes it so hard to conceive of ourselves as non-existent. Life, more life and fuller, is what instinct teaches us to crave for, as of the very essence of what we call our "I." And this need is learned not so much by intellectual reflection upon life as by the experience of living itself. Life precedes reason, and Unamuno would bid us reverse the order of Descartes' dictum. Not *Cogito ergo sum*, but, as he says, "the truth is *sum, ergo cogito*—I am, therefore I think, although not everything that is thinks."

"Is not consciousness of thinking," he says, "above all consciousness of being? Is pure thought possible, without consciousness of self, without personality? Can there exist pure knowledge without feeling, without that species of materiality which feeling lends to it? Do we not perhaps feel thought, and do we not feel ourselves in the act of knowing and willing? Could not the man in the stove have said, 'I feel, therefore I am'? or 'I will, therefore I am'? And to feel oneself, is it not perhaps to feel oneself imperishable? To will oneself, is it not to wish oneself eternal—that is to say, not to wish to die? What the sorrowful Jew of Amsterdam called the essence of the thing, the effort that it makes to persist indefinitely in its own being, self-love, the longing for immortality, is it not perhaps the primal and fundamental condition of all reflective or human knowledge? And is it not therefore the true base, the real starting-point, of all philosophy, although the philosophers, perverted by intellectualism, may not recognize it?"<sup>1</sup>

If, then, we are to discover our starting-point for a belief in a future life within experience itself, the longing not to die, the hunger for personal immortality, the effort whereby we tend to persist indefinitely in our own being which Spinoza suggested is our very essence, how much more true it is to say that in our lived experiences in the higher levels of life we shall naturally expect to find fuller and deeper intimations of immortality. In the æsthetic appreciation of the Beautiful, the moral grandeur of the True, and the appeal which the Good makes to the highest in us, with its binding obligation acknowledged by the human conscience—in these deeper levels of human experience we discover the confirmation of that "urge to fuller life" which life itself teaches us is the reason for our belief in a life to come. But above all the intimations of immortality from such experiences of life in its varied activities, there is the profound sense of God reached in religious experience. And this is the deepest and the surest foundation upon which we can build up our faith in Eternal Life. Here we part company with Unamuno. His belief in God, so far as we can gather from the book before us, is the outcome of his belief in his own immortality. Is

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 35-6.

this true to religious experience? Must we not reverse the order and say that it is belief in God which alone justifies our hope of personal immortality, and in fact which alone gives to such a personal immortality that fullness and richness of ethical and spiritual content which we associate with the idea of Eternal Life as we claim to know it in religious experience?

We must be very careful, in fact, not to draw a false conclusion from our "hunger for immortality." The existence of the hunger is no guarantee of its satisfaction. That we may have to starve is an equally legitimate inference. The most we can say about our instinct for a fuller and richer life, and the need for a satisfaction of those depths in human personality which the world fails to fill, is that we have in their presence a revelation of what we are made for, and what we ought to become. In this sense they are a proof that we are greater than we know, and they point us to the beyond, and reveal to us our hidden powers of a higher becoming. They are not, however, a proof that we shall be or must be immortal. The argument from feelings and desires which is sometimes put forward as a justification for a belief in their ultimate necessary satisfaction must be used with caution if it is to be used at all. When, then, Unamuno, in a fine chapter on "Love, Suffering, Pity, and Personality," builds up his concept of God from our own felt needs, we must protest that the conclusion is by no means legitimate. Consider, for example, the implications of the following passage:

"When pity, love, reveals to us the whole universe striving to gain, to preserve, and to enlarge its consciousness, striving more and more to saturate itself with consciousness, feeling the pain of the discords which are produced within it, pity reveals to us the likeness of the whole universe with ourselves; it reveals to us that it is human, and it leads us to discover our Father in it, of whose flesh we are flesh; love leads us to personalize the whole of which we form a part. To say that God is eternally producing things is fundamentally the same as saying that things are eternally producing God. And the belief in a personal and spiritual God is based on the belief in our own personality and spirituality. Because we



feel ourselves to be consciousness, we feel God to be consciousness—that is to say, a person ; and because we desire ardently that our consciousness shall live and be independently of the body, we believe that the divine person lives and exists independently of the universe, that his state of consciousness is *ab extra*.

“No doubt logicians will come forward and confront us with the evident rational difficulties which this involves ; but we have already stated that, although presented under logical forms, the content of all this is not strictly rational. Every rational conception of God is in itself contradictory. Faith in God is born of love for God—we believe that God exists by force of wishing that He may exist, and it is born also, perhaps, of God’s love for us. Reason does not prove to us that God exists, but neither does it prove that He cannot exist.”<sup>1</sup>

Now, is this true to religious experience? As a matter of history we know that the content of the world to come has been largely determined by man’s conception of God, and the belief in immortality has grown with the development of the religious consciousness. We do not create GOD in order to justify our instinct for immortality. We believe in eternal life because of our experience of God in prayer and communion. If we trace the history of the development of the belief in immortality amongst the Jews, we see at once that it was the experience of God and the joy of communion which justified the belief in the perdurance of the personal life after death. The living relationship between the pious Israelite and his God brought the conviction that a spiritual bond thus established could not be severed by death. The starting-point is never our love for God, but God’s love for us. We begin with our discovery of God’s Presence, but that discovery is itself only made possible by a prior activity of God Himself in making His Presence known amongst men. The need for God is one thing. It is the creation of God Himself, and due to His own activity in revealing Himself to men. Our need for Him is not the first nor the essential element in the birth of faith in a life eternal. His revelation of Himself

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 149–50.

to the human soul is the primary factor, and because of the experience of fellowship and communion resulting from this, there arises within us the conviction that death is not the last word, and that because our living relationship to a living and loving God is precious not only to us but to Him, He will not acquiesce in our being blotted out of the Book of Life.

Professor Unamuno is not unmindful of this aspect of the problem, but he does not emphasize it, we venture to think, in the way it should be emphasized in view of its importance as of the very nerve of the deepest religious experience, not least in the Christian consciousness of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

"It is the furious longing to give finality to the Universe," Unamuno says, "to make it conscious and personal, that has brought us to believe in God, to wish that God may exist, to create God, in a word. To create Him, yes! This saying ought not to scandalize even the most devout Theist. For to believe in God is, in a certain sense, to create Him, although He first creates us. It is He who in us is continually creating Himself." <sup>1</sup>

Christian experience would quietly answer that far from our having created God in order to save the Universe from nothingness, and far from our needing Him in order to save consciousness, on the contrary, we love Him because He first loved us, and the supreme proof of His existence is to be sought if anywhere in His own self-disclosure. It is because in Him we live and move and have our being that we discover Him in human life. He is there before us. His mercies and His grace prevent as well as follow us.

Unamuno is on firmer ground when he tells us in a later chapter that—

"the attributes of the living God, of the Father of Christ, must be deduced from His historical revelation in the Gospel and in the conscience of every Christian believer, and not from metaphysical reasonings which lead only to the Nothing-God of Scotus Erigena, to the rational or pantheistic God, to the atheist God—in short, to the de-personalized Divinity." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 167.

Granted that the way of love and suffering, rather than the way of reason, is the one to tread in our search after the living God, it is not true to say that we cannot first know Him in order that afterwards we may love Him ; that we must begin by loving Him, longing for Him, hungering after Him, *before* knowing Him. On the contrary, the verdict of Catholic experience is that His Presence and activity in our human life precedes and is itself the condition and cause of such striving as we are capable of in our search. He awakens in us the hunger for Himself which He alone can satisfy. Such is the verdict of Christian experience. Hence to believe in God is not to long for His existence, and to act as if He existed. It is to know by discovery that He *is*, and to realize in experience the revelation of Himself which He makes. Such a discovery in such an experience carries with it its own evidence of reality. From it we deduce the content of Eternal Life. In it we find the only really satisfying evidence we can ever have that death is not God's last word for us.

This brings us to another section of our subject, viz. what Professor Unamuno aptly describes as the Mythology of the Beyond.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE BEYOND

WHEN we face the question, What may we expect the other side of death? it is clear that our answers must to a large extent, and some would say must be wholly, a matter of pure speculation and conjecture. If our life here is lived under the limitations of time and space, it is contended that all attempts at pictorial imagery and representation of the life beyond the grave are inevitably conceived under categories of thought which compel us to express in terms of extension a reality which presumably is not capable of so being expressed. What the conditions of life under supra-terrestrial conditions may be, we can never know this side of the grave, and all our efforts to conceive of such a life are fatally infected by our inability to express them in any other terms than those under which we are compelled to think here, viz. in the thought-forms of our finite life. Hence the "prudent agnostic parsimony" with which Unamuno charges what he calls "Protestantism" and which he thinks would bid us embrace the pure and naked faith in an eternal life without trying to represent it to ourselves. We should say that the need for a cautious and reverent agnosticism concerning the secret things of the Lord our God was an article enjoined upon us by Scripture itself, and that men will be well advised to learn from the silence of revealed truth concerning the conditions of our life hereafter to avoid an over-eager prying curiosity concerning things at present hidden from us, which presumably we could not understand even if they were revealed to us. Least of all dare we venture to be over-dogmatic concerning the conditions of a mode of life which we imagine the blessed

dead in paradise, or for that matter the lost souls in hell, are living. Take, again, the vexed question of the resurrection-body. Clearly here dogmatism from whatever source—be it from over-confident rationalism or over-credulous superstition—is above all things else to be avoided. Until we know for certain whether the “future life” is to be lived in space or independently of it, it is, to say the least of it, hazardous to define with any precision the nature and constitution, the properties and characteristics, of the “glorious body” with which we believe that we shall be “clothed upon.” Professor Unamuno, however, has little patience with this attitude of reverent caution for which we are contending.

“Yes,” he says, “the prudent, the rational, and, some will say, the pious attitude, is not to seek to penetrate into mysteries that are hidden from our knowledge, not to insist upon shaping a plastic representation of eternal glory, such as that of the *Divina Commedia*. True faith, true Christian piety, we shall be told, consists in resting upon the confidence that God, by the grace of Christ, will, in some way or another, make us live in Him, in His Son; that, as our destiny is in His almighty hands, we should surrender ourselves to Him, in the full assurance that He will do with us what is best for the ultimate end of life, of spirit, and of the universe. Such is the teaching that has traversed many centuries, and was notably prominent in the period between Luther and Kant.”<sup>1</sup>

And on the whole, we should add, with beneficial results. For what is the alternative? We are inundated to-day with books of various kinds in which the writers seek to reveal to us in minute detail the whole topography of the Beyond. And the more carefully we examine such pictures, the more convinced we are that the writers are simply endeavouring to represent the future life in terms of the present, and to transfer to the Unknown Country the characteristic features of our mundane existence here.

True, as Unamuno reminds us, we cannot rule out speculation nor forbid men to attempt to imagine to themselves what eternal life may be, but at least we may warn them of the pitfalls into which they must inevitably stumble,

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 223.



and the dangers to which a crudely materialistic representation of the life after death is exposed. If eternal life is a prolongation of our present temporal life, and endlessness of days is to be offered to us as a substitute for spiritual richness and intensity of life in God, the finest spirits here will shrink from the prospect and prefer annihilation to the "heaven" of the spiritists' "revelation." It may be true, as Unamuno says, that—

"to this same necessity, the real necessity of forming to ourselves a concrete representation of what this other life may be, must in great part be referred the indestructible vitality of doctrines such as those of spiritualism, metempsychosis, the transmigration of souls from star to star, and the like ; doctrines which, as often as they are pronounced to be defeated and dead, are found to have come to life again, clothed in some more or less new form. And it is merely supine to be content to ignore them and not to seek to discover their permanent and living essence. Man will never willingly abandon his attempt to form a concrete representation of the other life." <sup>1</sup>

All this, we repeat, may be true, but the remedy is not to encourage such speculations, but to seek to point out their inevitable limitations and purely conjectural character, whilst at the same time drawing attention to the essential elements in the problem, if we are ever to know here the real content of the Hereafter.

Are there, then, any guiding lines of thought suggested in religious experience which enable us in some sense to know, however imperfectly, here, the kind of life we are destined to live the other side of the grave? We think that there are, and that we are not left wholly in the dark in our search. All that is needed is a clearer apprehension of the true direction in which we must look if we are to appreciate to any extent the real nature of eternal life. We must seek it in the realm not of material well-being, not in the endless prolongation of life as such, but in the sphere of ethical and spiritual values. Life in heaven or life in hell must be interpreted in terms of a living relationship of the human soul with God. Our Eternal

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 223.

Life is bound up with Him, and whilst endless life without Him is conceivable, yet it can only be "eternal death."

Scientific investigation and philosophical speculation, as we have seen, leave the problem open. We have no conclusive evidence that we shall not survive bodily death. On the contrary, although the prediction of the late F. W. H. Myers, to the effect that this twentieth century would witness a belief on the part of all reasonable men in the Resurrection of Christ as the result of the "new evidence" furnished by experimental psychology and the investigation of psychic phenomena, has not been fulfilled, yet we can say that the negative attitude of Tyndall and Huxley has in our own time yielded to a growing appreciation of the "survival value" of the spiritual over the material. Therefore a belief in our survival after bodily death is at least a reasonable hypothesis, though lacking conclusive demonstration.

Granted, then, for the sake of argument, that death is the gate of life; that physical death is not nature's last word; that rather life is the law of nature and death a natural means to more life; that we die in order to live; the question still remains, What are the conditions for a *continued* life after death? What, in other words, are the essentials for *eternal* life?

It by no means follows, because we are great enough in the scale of being to survive the shock of physical death and to persist through so great a change, that therefore we shall live for ever. What of the butterfly which survives the grub and chrysalis stages? Does it therefore live for ever? Must we say that eternal life is ours by right, inherent in our very constitution? Is the gift of life inalienable? Because we live must we therefore continue to live through all change; on beyond the great sundering of mind and body; through change and more change in a never-ending existence after death?

Clearly we are driven to face the question, What exactly is the content of eternal life, and to what extent is it bound up inevitably with God and our relationship to Him?

Many will recall in this connexion Professor Drummond's

treatment of the problem in his *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. What precisely is Death, and what are the conditions of Life? Professor Drummond took Herbert Spencer's definition: "Perfect correspondence would be perfect life. Were there no changes in the environment but such as the organism had adapted changes to meet, and were it never to fail in the efficiency with which it met them, there would be eternal existence and eternal knowledge."

Life, then, is "the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations," and death must be a failure, partial or complete, of adjustment to environment.

If this be true of physical life, it is surely suggestive of the conditions of life in the supra-terrestrial world. As Professor Drummond points out, the higher in the scale of being we go, the more the need for wider correspondence. Thus the tree lives in its correspondence with a very narrow environment, the soil about its stem, the sunlight and the air in contact with its leaves. But, by this very condition, there are whole worlds for ever shut out from it, and to which it is "dead." The animal world has a wider range and has access therefore to higher worlds. But a hundred things beyond the range of tree, insect, and animal are studied by man. The tree in correspondence with a narrow area of environment is to that extent alive; to all beyond, to the all but infinite area beyond, it is dead. Wider still is the range of insect and bird, but theirs is a relatively small world compared to ours. The inevitable question arises, What is man's true environment, and is he in perfect correspondence with every part of it? If so, and if he has the power of continuance in correspondence, he has the power of endless life. Now, there is in man the spirit open to the influence of the spiritual world. By virtue of his creation as a child of God, he has access to a spiritual environment, and his growth and development as a spiritual being is conditioned by his correspondence or failure in correspondence to this environment.

Thus the extent and depth of his communion with the Highest is the extent of the abundance of true life which he may possess. Thus we are driven back to the Biblical

conception of Eternal Life which is through and through ethical and spiritual, not material. Life in God ; communion with God ; a vital correspondence between the spirit of man and the Father of spirits : these are the essential conditions of Eternal Life which is Life indeed.

Death in the physical and in the spiritual world must be irresponsiveness to environment : a failure in the " continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations." So Professor Drummond presses the analogy of natural law in the spiritual world and suggests the possibility of *spiritual death*.

We have ample warrant in the Bible for such a conception. Spiritual death may be begun here and be partial, with the possibility at long last of finality.

" To be carnally minded is death," " the wages of sin is death," " dead in trespasses and sins." All through, the emphasis in Holy Writ rests not upon the concept of physical death, which is but a stage in a process, a necessary incident in a developing life : the stress lies upon the ethical and spiritual reality of which physical death and physical life are but symbols and suggestions. The death unto sin and the new birth unto righteousness—these are the vital realities, the all-important spiritual phenomena, about which we must be concerned in the problem of man's eternal welfare.

Thus the all-important question is the *quality* of life : its durability is a qualitative not a quantitative question. The life which can survive the death of the body and be powerful enough to remain alive and exempt from the death of the soul—the spiritual life which is deathless, this side and the other side of the grave—must be a life which is in perfect adjustment to its true environment, God and the supernatural. The perfect life over which death has no power has been revealed and is known to us in the life of Him who said, " I am the Resurrection and the Life : he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Eternal life is thus seen to consist in a relationship—ethical and spiritual—between man and his Maker ; communion with God is the essential condition of its health and its continuance.

What, then, may we expect the other side of Death? Obviously there are two possible states: Spiritual Life and Spiritual Death; Heaven and Hell. Between these two extremes there may be all kinds of intermediate states, partial life and partial death, just as here there are many stages between perfect health and physical death: there are diseases from which we recover, and diseases to which we finally succumb, after long illness. Here also there are diseases of the soul: lives now being lived in the flesh and not in the spirit—lives therefore gradually falling out of correspondence with God. To the extent to which the highest in us is in communion with its true environment, to that extent we have Life indeed, and our failure to live in vital communion with God is our spiritual death.

Now, we have seen that the tree can be alive and yet at the same time dead to all the higher levels of life. This suggests the conception of the true nature of Hell. We may and probably shall survive bodily death, but this may mean simply our introduction to an existence which, real so far as it goes, is yet (judged by the higher levels to which the spirit of man was meant to attain), because of its failure to reach these levels, a life without God, i.e. Hell. It means a life from which God has gradually faded out, a life therefore which is arrested in its true growth and which has sunk to a lower level. It is the narrow stunted life of the tree, natural for the tree but unnatural for a being capable of a wider range of life than the tree can ever enjoy.

Much of our failure to conceive of the conditions of such a life arises from our lack of imagination. Yet there is sufficient in Scripture to enable us to gauge more or less accurately what such a life can be and will be. We are, for example, assured over and over again that the life centred upon earthly things and refusing the higher is a life of vanity, emptiness. That the things of sense are perishable; that earthly treasures are liable to decay: open to the ravages of time like the moth-eaten garment or the rusty material. Over all the pleasures of the world—the lust of the eye, the lust of the palate—there is written the word "Vanity."



Conceive, then, a life which still desires these things, and yet has come at long last to a knowledge of their emptiness ; think of being compelled to pursue the things of sense, and being forced none the less to discover that they can yield no contentment. Hell would be spiritual loss, the missing of reality and a compulsory sojourn in a self-chosen world of unreality.

It would be difficult to find a book which drives this ominous lesson home more forcibly than one published first in 1884 and which since then has run into we do not know how many editions. Its English title is *Letters from Hell*, and the author has given us a vivid and dramatic picture of the life of unreality in all its hideous suggestiveness. We are shown the power of the natural man by rejecting God to make for himself a world in which he himself is the reality—a world of outer darkness where there is no deliverance from self. Passage after passage drives this awful lesson home. Let us quote :

“ I begin to understand the moving-springs of hell. It is insatiate desire on the one hand and remorse on the other. I had almost said sorrow ; but that is too sweet a grace, admitting of sorrow for sin, for opportunity wasted, and that is unknown here ; it is a dull flinty grief, a mere wailing for pain. The punishment of hell is twofold, but after all it is the self-same retribution. Some are driven continuously to brood over the same evil passions they indulged in on earth, satisfaction alone being absent ; or with horror and loathing are obliged again and again to commit in the spirit the self-same crimes that polluted their days in the flesh. The miser for ever is dreaming of riches, the voluptuary of uncleanness, the glutton of feasting, the murderer of his bloody deed. Others, on the contrary, are pursuing the very things they neglected on earth ; they know it is hopeless, but pursue them they must. Thus men of unjust dealing are anxiously trying to right the wrong, the unmerciful to do deeds of charity, the unnatural parent to live for her children, the suicide to prolong his days. . . .

“ This, then, is the law of hell : we are not tormented—we torment ourselves. Yet remember that in dying everything depends on whether we lived in the faith of the Son of God,

who gave His life that men might be saved. Our sins have that dread importance in as far as they testify that we did not believe. Do you marvel that I speak of God? Ah me, He is still our God! And we know that there is a Son of God who came into the world to save sinners, who loved them unto death, even the death of the Cross. But we know nothing of the way of salvation; everything is forgotten—the very name of the Saviour. We consume ourselves in terrible efforts to remember, were it but the faintest remnant of saving knowledge, but alas it is vain—not even His name! Could we remember that name, call it back to our hearts, I doubt not—I doubt not—even we might be saved. But it is gone—it is too late! too late!

“It is incredible how much I have forgotten; indeed, I might say I have forgotten everything except myself. Yes, that is it. I have not forgotten self; on the contrary, whatever of the past concerns my person and my life has followed me hither with a minuteness of detail as strange as it is painful. But the clothes of self, as it were—the things I once possessed by knowledge, by intellectual acquirement,—they have vanished together with the gifts of mammon and the vanities of the flesh. You will not be surprised, then, that the feeling of nakedness is so terribly present with me.

“I have brought nothing hither but myself. And what comprises this self but a burning remorse which can never be stilled; a greed of desire which can never be satisfied; an unquenchable longing for things left behind; innumerable recollections of sins great and small, causing insufferable anguish, all being equally bitter, equally fraught with vainest regret! This is the picture of myself, O God,—of myself in hell.”

The significance of such a descriptive passage will not be missed. The gradual fading out of the life of God so that in the end it becomes impossible even to remember His very Name. There is a pathetic description in one of the letters of the man's effort to recall the Lord's Prayer when he never succeeds in getting beyond the first two words, “Our Father”—the rest he has entirely forgotten. Note again the power of the dwellers in Hell to possess anything for the asking.

“You must know” (he tells us), “that each wretched being

here is moved by an irresistible impulse to imitate his life on earth, to continue what in sinful folly he worked in that life. And, strange to say, as I have already hinted, we can all obtain here what we like ; one need but think of anything and there it is. Passion and wrongful desires rule here as they do in the world, only the more horrible, being void of substance. In the world they are clothed—clothed in a semblance of beauty even ; lawless and pernicious though they are, they at least own the garment of nature. But here they are mere skeletons, unclothed of the flesh, an insult to nature, continuing in the evil bent of former habit, yet incapable of aught but showing their miserable nakedness. For the imaginings of hell are hollow and empty, void of truth and reality, bereft of all means of satisfaction. And yet the very punishment of hell consists in this, that we are driven to conform to this maddening unreality, this death-breathing nothingness. No matter how deeply conscious we are of the vanity of our doings—no matter how we loathe them—they have come to be our masters ; we are driven, helplessly driven, to be for ever trying to be what we were on earth."

Now, the suggestions contained in these passages are in profound accord with the untiring Biblical warnings as to the essential unreality of the things of sense in comparison with the things of the spirit : we can never say that we were not warned of the relative value of the material and spiritual : of the need to lay up for ourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. If then, in spite of this, we still persist in centring our thoughts and affections on things below, not on things above, we shall reap our just reward : we shall have all we have asked for ; all we have striven after : no desire of the flesh will be denied us, but with it will be also the full realization of its essential worthlessness. We shall know fully the significance of the lesson we refused to learn, viz. that for a being endowed with the potentiality for God—a life without God is the great loss for which nothing else can compensate. We may gain the whole world if we wish, but in doing so we shall lose our own souls. The possession of all the world can give will be ours, but with the knowledge that over it all must be written the one word "Vanity"—Emptiness

viewed from the standpoint of the spirit of man made in the image of God. To us is given the fearful responsibility of choice—the choice between conscious acceptance of the highest or conscious acquiescence in the lower. We are great enough to choose our own damnation; strong enough to take a leap out of the Hand of Eternal Love into the abyss of Self and all it entails: isolation—self-centred egoism, and the drying-up of the springs of affection; the atrophy of the spiritual instincts; the inevitable cessation of the hunger of the soul. Having rejected God, we shall in time cease to feel the need for Him. His world fades from us. We become dead to it, though fully alive in a lower level of life. We may define Hell as a Natural Life lived in a Supernatural Environment. Heaven will be a Supernatural Life lived in Supernatural surroundings. Hell must be spiritual numbness, and in Hell they must build many altars to an Unknown God. Hence the profound significance of the Biblical teaching:

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”<sup>1</sup>

Hence also the vital need for the spiritual birth and the spiritual growth as a condition of entrance into and continuance in the Kingdom of God.

“Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” “Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in Me. . . . He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from Me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”<sup>2</sup>

It thus becomes increasingly clear that Eternal Life and the “New Birth” are intimately connected. Through

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> John xv. 4-6.

the regeneration of the natural man, we enter into a new world, a life on a higher level, governed and shaped by a spiritual principle, a creative activity of the Holy Spirit for a definite purpose that Christ may be formed in us. We are taken possession of by the Christ-Life. Left to ourselves, the utmost that can result is a growth from the natural to the natural. It would seem that the climax of the natural is the moral. Beyond that Nature cannot raise us. If we are to attain to the spiritual we must be born anew. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh: that which is born of the spirit is spirit." Thus the religious life transcends the moral, and this because it takes its rise from a Life-Principle descending upon us from above. Is this to draw a rigid distinction between morality and religion? In a sense, "Yes." "Spirituality," it has been said, "is morally beautiful—but the morally beautiful need not be spiritual." Moral beauty is the product of the natural man: spiritual beauty of the spiritual man. The spiritual life is not the result of any spontaneous generation from the natural.

This whole line of thought is worked out by Professor Drummond in the book to which we have previously referred. There is in the human a capacity for the Divine, but no natural law by which all that is human must necessarily and automatically arrive in due course at God-likeness. We may miss our Divine destiny and fail of God's purpose towards us. It is too lightly assumed that the Fatherhood of God necessitates the Divine sonship of men. In the sphere of the spiritual, kinship is not a matter of physical parentage but conditional upon the active participation in the Divine Life and the maintenance of moral and spiritual relationship. It is within the power of the sons of men to repudiate the Father in Heaven. Sonship may be rejected. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God." Our Eternal Life—the very essence of which is fellowship with God—is something to be achieved, a task awaiting us; and in the gaining of the prize of so high a calling we must bend all our energies, be prepared in absolute obedience to be conformed, to be converted, to be fashioned anew, to yield



ourselves to His control, to bring every thought, every desire, every natural gift and disposition to the obedience of Christ. The Kingship of Jesus over those who are being saved must be absolute. Not by any natural evolutionary process, not by education, culture, intellectual, or æsthetic, are we to achieve for ourselves an entrance into the Kingdom of the Spirit. Self-determination, the will to live, the will to achieve, are not in place. Nicodemus with all his natural gifts and graces, with all his intellectual qualifications as a religious teacher, with all his social status and moral refinement, must, nevertheless, be born anew, and is bidden not to marvel at the necessity since the "New Birth" is from above, not a natural evolution from beneath. It does not spring from the earth, but descends upon men—this Kingdom of God—this life on a higher level—this fellowship with God in Christ; it is a Divine operation through and through. It is a Birth not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. It is an Experience, and those who possess it are worlds apart from the outside critics of the religious life.

It is, in short, experience of Eternal Life in time and space. It is, moreover, the ground of our belief in its continuance beyond the grave, and our justification for asserting that here and now we do know to a limited extent, and in some slight measure, what is the content of that Eternal Life in God which we look forward to as the consummation of our being.

Endless life without God is conceivable. Eternal Life in God is a fuller, richer, deeper reality, and religious experience has no hesitation in fixing upon this as the true meaning and value of immortality for the finite soul. This much at least we can claim to know from Scripture teaching and Divine Revelation. We are not then abandoning ourselves to hopeless speculation when we affirm that our conception of the Life to come is based upon solid grounds in a living experience here of Eternal Life, and we are right to argue from the known to the unknown, from the imperfect to the perfect. Heaven may transcend all our finite efforts to picture it. But we shall not be hopelessly astray when

we insist here on interpreting it in terms of the highest ethical and spiritual values we know. It may transcend these values. It certainly will not fall below them.

So we insist upon the religious value of the Christian doctrine of Eternal Life and maintain that in this is to be found a sure guide in the search after the content of life in the world to come.

Even if spiritism were to produce conclusive evidence of our survival of bodily death, it would bring with it no religious consolation. Would a life without God be in itself in the least desirable if prolonged indefinitely? The very tedium of it would appal us in time and make us long for extinction. If our hunger for immortality is not at bottom a hunger for God, we were better without it. The needs of the human spirit are such as to demand for their satisfaction nothing less than God Himself. Christianity is true to the needs of human life when it offers to us Life in God as the content of Eternal Life, which we can accept or reject as we will. Spiritism if it leaves out God condemns itself as an inadequate substitute.

We reach, then, this position, that if we are ever to gain any indication this side of the grave as to the kind of life we may expect the other side of death, we must concentrate our whole attention upon the ethical and spiritual implications of the life we are now living. Much of our speculation, we admit, is necessarily mythological, but we have given reasons for suggesting that there are certain factors in human character and certain attitudes of mind and heart in relation to the Divine which are sure guides in helping us to form some conception here of what Eternal Life must be. We have seen, moreover, that our conclusions are based upon Scriptural teaching and have in fact the warrant of Christ's own words. Nothing is more striking in this connexion than His whole attitude towards the current eschatology of His time. He breathed into it His own Spirit, and in His hands it underwent a complete transformation. He purged it of a crude materialism, and He left us with a "transmuted eschatology," spiritual and ethical through and through.

With this in mind, let us now face the crucial problem of Personal Immortality.

If Eternal Life for us is Life in God and its essence consists in a lived relationship between us as finite created spirits and Him as the Father of spirits, it is clear that our future can be no absorption into the Infinite.

We must in this connexion take creation seriously with all that it involves. It means for the Christian his belief that God's self-limitation has made possible our existence as beings with a derived but none the less comparatively independent and permanent life over against His, so that our experience is not His. He can, by sympathy, enter into our experience and in this sense share it. We are precluded from regarding Him as an All-inclusive Spirit who lives in us, and experiences through us. The Christian Personal God is no Stoic *Anima Mundi* in any pantheistic sense. Far from this being the case, the act of creation has given us a measure of apartness from Him. This means that ultimately God is not ourselves : we are not temporary or even permanent phases of the Divine Being. We are real in some sense in our own right as the result of His self-limitation, and therefore we can say that God is not all that is real. The total Reality is God *plus* the totality of created life from the amoeba upwards. He has willed that in finite spirits there shall exist realities who are not Himself nor mere aspects of His life. Thus, and thus alone, can there exist between Him and us relationships and a basis for communion and intercourse such as we dare to believe is the design of a God of Love in our creation.

Such communion, moreover, is the end and achievement of our true being. For it we were made, in it we truly live, and with its continuance in ever-increasing richness is bound up our enjoyment of life indeed. Such communion will derive its content from what He is and what we are capable of becoming. The love of such a God will not rest content with a response from us less than the highest, and His tireless activity is, we believe, being directed to no less an end than the creating and fashioning anew of us, His finite creatures,

into true sonship. We are to become the sons of God. The content, then, of Eternal Life, begun here and continued hereafter, is a growing assimilation to an Ideal, revealed in Him. Likeness by sharing His Life is our End.

If, as we believe, the Life of God is a Life of Holy Love, it must ever be giving, ever communicating, ever reproducing. His purpose is to make us like Himself, and His whole activity in a sinful world is soteriological, and bent upon redemptive purposes. The method and scope of our Redemption are seen in the Life and Work of Christ, whereby are made possible a regeneration and a re-creation of sinful men after His likeness.

Our eternal life in Him, then, can be nothing other than His in its essential content. It must be therefore a life of intense activity in self-donation for ethical and spiritual ends.

Such a life, of necessity, means that the Hereafter is a society—a brotherhood, a community. It is, then, for the individual no state of static bliss ; no sublime self-satisfaction or hedonistic self-gratification, but a life of service to God and man. It is to be personal through and through, and at the same time social. Our relationship to Him in communion and prayer is not to mean our isolation from human companionship and human relationship. In Him we are to be united one to another. Heaven is to be a Perfect Society. Our true happiness and blessedness will consist in the happiness and blessedness of us all. We shall not lack the opportunity of losing our life to find it at a higher level.

We must banish finally from our thought of God what has well been described as <sup>1</sup> "the translation into metaphysic of the spirit of the world, of the axiom that the supreme privilege of greatness is self-centred bliss, exemption from service, burden-bearing, and sacrifice"—a conception which misses the Divine secret of God, what, to the Christian mind, is the "topmost ineffablest crown" of His Glory—self-sacrificing Love. A Christian philosophy is truest to human experience when it bids men find greatness in self-surrender, lordship in

<sup>1</sup> Robert Law, *The Tests of Life*, third ed., p. 103. (A truly valuable contribution to the Christian teaching concerning Eternal Life.)

being the servant of all and the saviour of all, and points them for the discovery of the open secret of the universe and the heart of Reality, "to see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of a crucified Jesus."

Eternal Life in the light of the foregoing considerations becomes for us not an idea, but a fact of experience. Its content is not a matter for speculation, but a life which can be to some extent tasted and tested here in time and space. We reach it not by projecting into the far future an imaginary existence after death, but by an inward experience before death. Were Heaven a mere idea in our own minds or the result of an exercise of the imagination, it is obvious that our belief in it could be shaken by the first proof that life out of the body cannot be life in any sense as we know it in time and space. Its content must be utterly different, and no mental picture we try to form of it can correspond in any conceivable sense to the Reality. Translate it, however, into terms of life, ethical and spiritual in relationship to God and men, and it becomes obvious that the life that is to be is not so utterly unlike the life we know as to render the future for us in kind different from what it is. The difference is one of degree only. We experience here imperfectly a communion of soul with soul, soul with God, such as is to be enjoyed in ever-increasing fullness and richness in a Blessed Hereafter.

If we still persist in thinking of Heaven as a place, then the question must be faced :

"Where is this Heaven that you talk about? Is it about your head? is it beneath your feet? Do you seriously think that if you were to go millions of miles in any quarter of the compass you would find it? Is it anywhere in all space? and if not, *what* is its *where*? Is there another world besides the whole world?

" . . . The world to come disappears in a moment like a phantom; the reign of the apparition is over, and a dream is dispelled: it is the unbelieving counterpart of conversion; a man awakens in conversion to the reality of the invisible world; here he awakens to its nonentity." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mozley, *University Sermons*, "Eternal Life," p. 57.



It is true that metaphysics can never give us the certainty we desire, nor can Christianity itself demonstrate beyond the possibility of doubt the existence of a life after death.

"It summons man to wait and gird himself to a long trial, before the final experiment ; to a lifelong repose in an expectation ; to an argument which never concludes ; and to an act of interpretation which never stops. But is the interpretation a blind guess in consequence ? "

We should say that experience of ethical and spiritual Reality as we know it here bids us trust in the survival value of Values as the deepest and the purest things we know in personal lives. If their End is to perish, we know nothing which better deserves to live.

"When anything beautiful in human character takes its departure from the world, what is the first ejaculation of the human heart but one for its immortality ? Can it perish—the priceless treasure of this personal life ? The survivor says No : such being must go on being." <sup>1</sup>

Instinct shares with experience the faith that values are ultimate reality—i.e. God Himself ; and where they are found inhering in any personal finite life, they link that life to the Eternal and Abiding.

In pleading thus for the meaning and value of finite individuality and its infinite worth in relationship to God, we do so in the teeth of certain tendencies in ancient and modern philosophical thought which go far to depersonalize the ultimately Real in seeking to define God in terms of the Absolute and Immortality in terms of the racial soul. Christianity, however, holds fast to Christ's own teaching and life in relationship to human souls. We do not fall into the crass individualism which seeks to define God as a Spirit amongst spirits, or to regard the finite real as a windowless monad, impervious to all outside itself. We define God not as a Whole made up of parts, but the Ground of finite spirits and their living Unity. The human soul has no absolute independent existence, but it certainly has such a measure

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 80-1.

of independence as to conserve its value in the sight of its Maker, and secure for it the possibility of a permanent relationship to Himself.

The problem for the Christian is not to define the part in relation to the Whole, or the relative in reference to the Absolute. The question is lifted into the realm of personality, and the problem dealt with as a relationship between God and Man, here and hereafter.

Our belief in personal Immortality stands or falls with our belief in the Divine Love, and our conviction that in religious experience we are in living, vital communion with One who is not less than the highest we know, viz. personal.

A characteristic feature of the treatment of Immortality throughout the whole of Professor Unamuno's book is this insistence upon personal immortality. Anything short of it, he regards with supreme contempt.

"All this talk of a man surviving in his children, or in his works, or in the universal consciousness, is but vague verbiage which satisfies only those who suffer from affective stupidity, and who, for the rest, may be persons of a certain cerebral distinction. For it is possible to possess great talent, or what we call great talent, and yet to be stupid as regards the feelings and even morally imbecile."<sup>1</sup>

Our author is well aware of the charge of egoism which can be levelled against this insistence upon *personal* survival, yet he glories in the thought. The idea of the survival value of values apart from us to whom they are values, is abhorrent to him.

"And they come seeking to deceive us with a deceit of deceits, telling us that nothing is lost, that everything is transformed, shifts, and changes, that not the least particle of matter is annihilated, not the least impulse of energy is lost, and there are some who pretend to console us with this! Futile consolation! It is not my matter or my energy that is the cause of my disquiet, for they are not mine if I myself am not mine—that is, if I am not eternal. No, my longing is not to be submerged in the vast All, in an infinite and eternal

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 16.

Matter or Energy, or in God ; not to be possessed by God, but to possess Him, to become myself God, yet without ceasing to be I myself, I who am now speaking to you. Tricks of Monism avail us nothing ; we crave the substance and not the shadow of immortality.”<sup>1</sup>

This is strongly and vividly put, but it gives us an insight into the issues at stake.

Is the future life to be so utterly different from anything we know as to make it a matter of supreme indifference whether *we* survive as such, or continue lost in some larger and vaster life ? Bound up with this question is the whole issue as regards the problem of the Resurrection Body.

Listen to Unamuno, the man of flesh and blood, on the question :

“ Materialism, you say ? Materialism ? Without doubt ; but either our spirit is likewise some kind of matter or it is nothing. I dread the idea of having to tear myself away from my flesh ; I dread still more the idea of having to tear myself away from everything sensible and material, from all substance. Yes, perhaps this merits the name of materialism ; and if I grapple myself to God with all my powers and all my senses, it is that He may carry me in His arms beyond death, looking into these eyes of mine with the light of His heaven, when the light of earth is dimming in them for ever. Self-illusion ? Talk not to me of illusion—let me live ! ”<sup>2</sup>

Contrast a passage like this with Plato’s *Phædo*. Recall to mind the last hours of Socrates. Think of his cold-blooded indifference in parting from his wife and child. Clearly for him the world to which he is going is so utterly unlike the one he is leaving that human ties and mundane pursuits can find no counterpart there.

The man of flesh and blood is to put off the body, and with it all sensation, all we associate with life *in the flesh*. The immortality of the soul is the one and only concept before the Greek Socrates. The modern Spanish author whom we are considering makes us feel that there is something eternal possibly in flesh and blood. Life for him is so

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 46-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 47.

intimately bound up with the senses, that a *disembodied* existence feels by contrast cold and repellent. Is it the warmth of the southern clime that speaks to us here in the language of Spain, and the hot African blood which bids men *feel* life in this way? Is it, in other words, a question, merely, of temperament? Be that as it may, there is no doubt but that in the history of speculation on this problem there is traceable a clear divergence between the belief in the "immortality of the soul" and the belief in the "Resurrection of the Body." The two phrases stand for two concepts having little in common and sharply antithetical.

To which belief is the Christian committed?

The publication of Dr. Darragh's work on *The Resurrection of the Flesh* is opportune in that we have what we are told is perhaps the fullest study yet published of this important subject and an attempt made to give the whole of the evidence. The author claims to have brought together for the first time a complete review of Christian methods of explaining the doctrine to contemporary Christians during eighteen hundred years, and the result of such an examination of the evidence proves in his opinion that the Church teaching on the subject has been clearly spiritual and opposed to any crudely materialistic interpretation of the resurrection of the flesh. Dr. Darragh dwells at length upon the dangers of a false materialism and a false spiritualism, and claims that "identity between the present and the future body is the essential feature of the doctrine, and vital to its moral force." How such identity is maintained, from the moment of conception through all the vicissitudes of life until death, is itself a mystery, but no one doubts the fact. This vital identity does not arise from identity of physical elements. We are bidden to seek for such light as is available in our endeavours to penetrate to the heart of the mystery by studying the Resurrection Body of Jesus Christ and His Sacramental Presence in the Eucharist.

"No one, not even the simplest," says Dr. Darragh, "can entertain physical ideas about the future resurrection of the dead, nor of the Resurrection of our Lord to which men's

future resurrection is to conform, who is accustomed to approach the Altar in awe and reverence and loves to feed on the Risen Body of his Lord, actually and really present there for him to receive."

So we have the appeal from one mystery to another—the mystery of the Sacramental Presence of the Risen Body illuminates the mystery of the resurrection when He "shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of His glory."

We do not propose to enter into the merits of this particular question. We gladly welcome the publication of such a work as Dr. Darragh has given us, revealing as it does much research and painstaking effort in the collection of evidence for the defence and illumination of one article of the Christian Creed. In view of the statement of Augustine that "No article of the Christian faith has met with such vehement, persistent, and contentious opposition as the resurrection of the flesh," we must expect that in our own day controversy will centre around it and the old battles be renewed. What we want to do is to grasp the real issues at stake, and a reading of Dr. Darragh's work will enable us to see clearly the difference between a belief in the survival of the soul after death and the Christian teaching concerning the resurrection of the whole man. The Resurrection of the Flesh means the resurrection of the complete humanity; "flesh" in Scriptural usage meaning human nature, humanity in its completeness, including the soul as well as the body.

The whole point of the Christian teaching is that Eternal Life for the believer results from a New Birth and issues finally in a redemption of the whole man in Christ Jesus. It is not a question of the immortality of the natural life or of the survival of any one part of it, but a resurrection of the whole man and a redemption and transfiguration of the whole personality issuing in a *blessed* immortality which is Eternal Life in the sense in which we have defined it as a life begun here and to be lived in ever-increasing fullness and richness of experience of God and of our fellow-Christians in Christ Jesus, the Head of the Body.



So Dr. Darragh points out that—

“ the immortality of the soul is not once put forward by itself in the Bible. The reason for this is very simple and very obvious. God had provided some better thing for us. Not a ghost survival, but a reconstitution of the complete being was what He had in store for us, to be made known in due time. He made it known by giving us an example of it in the Resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ.”

Bound up with this belief is the whole doctrine of the Incarnation and God's redemptive purpose for men. A denial of it paves the way for some form of Manichæism, for a revival of the old pagan dualism and the doctrine of the intrinsic evilness of matter.

So the doctrine of the Creed, Dr. Darragh tells us,<sup>1</sup> involves two great issues :

(1) The identity that subsists between the risen body and the body of this life, between the spiritual body and the natural body ; and (2) the vast change that passes over the natural body in the process or act of becoming the spiritual body.

“ The tendency in the West has been,” he says, “ to emphasize the first, at times to the slurring over of the second. The East spoke more readily in terms of change. Either, if challenged, would unhesitatingly have confessed both the identity and the change. Whether the stress laid on the identity by Western preachers and theologians was the cause or the result of Manichæan opposition may be debated. The present writer has gained the impression that Christian writers and speakers of the West were driven to lay stress on the identity of the risen with the earthly body by the strong under-current in the popular mind of Manichæan prejudice against the resurrection of the body, and particularly by the readiness of some (after the example of the Paulicians, and not of them only) to recite the Creed and use its phrases in an esoteric sense of their own, whilst rejecting the natural and historic meaning of the words.”

Granted, then, that in the history of doctrine it is possible to find theologians who have interpreted the clause of the

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 68-9.

Creed in a grossly materialistic sense, and that the Scriptural teaching does not commit us to any such crude conception, but that rather the Church's teaching has been in the direction of a spiritual interpretation, the real question is not so much how we are to interpret this particular clause, but do we believe in the resurrection of the body at all?

Clearly a belief in the immortality of the soul only is not the Church's teaching. The doctrine of the resurrection of the whole man involves an attitude towards the things of the flesh and the bodily life which is essentially derived from the teaching of the Incarnation with its hallowing of matter and its benediction upon all that pertains to our bodily life.

"A heavy toll awaits any forgetfulness of God's truth. God by raising His Incarnate Son not in spirit only but in Body also, in complete Humanity, has made known the glorious future for which the human body is destined. Alas for the man who profanes his body or the bodies of others! Unless he repents in dust and ashes, it were better for that man if he had never been born."<sup>1</sup>

The Christian conception of Eternal Life, then, is bound up with the belief in the whole circle of Christian doctrine concerning the Person and Work of Christ, His Incarnation and His Sacrificial Death, His Victory through the Cross and triumphant Resurrection, the consequent gift of New Life to men through the Holy Spirit, His transforming power and redemptive work in human life, and the belief that in Him men are being changed from glory into glory. The Christian Resurrection is no mere survival of bodily death, no resuscitation of a dead corpse. It is something begun here and carried to a glorious conclusion through and beyond death. It is concerned not less with the redemption of the body from corruption than with the soul. The work of Christ, that is, pertains to the whole of human nature, and His salvation of the whole man makes for the Christian a *blessed* immortality in which personal intercourse with the Living God and in Him one with another is the essential element.

The question as to what conceivable part the "body"

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 263-4.

can play in a supra-terrestrial life is met by the suggestion that the sundering of body from soul at death is unnatural and abnormal. The true personality is a unity of both, and that unity must be preserved as necessary constituent of a true personality whether here or hereafter. Here we function through a material organism as a vehicle of self-expression and self-manifestation. There presumably we must also function and must need an organism of some kind for the same purpose. The spiritual body will be a perfect medium here for the functioning of a developing spiritual life, even as here the material body is an imperfect organ, at times more a hindrance than a help, in the struggle of the human personality for self-expression and upward striving. If only one part of us is to survive, and that is to be merged in the All or Over Soul, there will be no need of "bodies" to distinguish us one from another and no need of organs for self-manifestation; but if we are to live in a Society and continue in those human relationships which are of the very essence of our true life, then we can see at least one use for a spiritual body as a means of differentiation, and a medium for communication one with another. *Form* of some sort we must have, and it may quite well be there that—

Eternal Form shall still divide  
Th' Eternal Soul from all beside,  
And I shall know him when we meet.

When, then, the demand is made by the human heart for the preservation there of all we have loved long since and lost awhile, we are really asking for a continuance of those human ties, love and friendship, sanctified, deepened and enriched, purged of imperfection due to human frailty and sin, in a larger and better world. Instead of the colourless existence of a disembodied spirit, we have the promise in Christian teaching of something corresponding to the life we know here through the senses. Our end is not a Nirvana of annihilated desire, but the fruition of all we have caught a dim apprehension of through desire here. Ultimately it is a difference between no life and full life. If in human

love and intercourse here we have learned through the senses to taste of a deeper sweetness in communion, soul with soul, heart with heart, and in the companionship of a shared experience to live life at its deeper levels, then the future holds for us not the final abolition but the final fruition of these things, the presence of which in life here has made it desirable, and which account for that hunger after more life and fuller which men feel and which they believe that God Himself created in them in order finally to satisfy it.

Whilst, then, it is true that "flesh and blood" cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, and that in Heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage, this need not be interpreted as meaning the final obliteration of such things, but the purging from them of all that pertains to our existence in a terrestrial sphere in order that we may enjoy them in a purified and transfigured form in the supra-terrestrial realm.

We are persuaded that if the deeper implications of the doctrine of the Resurrection are more fully grasped, and the contrast between it and the belief in the immortality of the soul be more carefully considered, the value of the Christian conception will be more clearly revealed, and if we are to argue from Christ's Resurrection to our resurrection in Christ, then the significance of the teaching involved in the Church's belief in the Resurrection of the Flesh as opposed to rival theories will be more fully appreciated and more firmly adhered to.

## CHAPTER X

### DIVINE REVELATION

#### I

THE concept of Divine Revelation is the natural outcome of a few simple postulates of the religious life. It is rooted in religious experience and stands or falls with the validity of the latter. If we assume the existence of GOD as the Living One, a Being at the least not less than the highest we know, viz. Personal; and if, further, we think of Him as Perfect Personality and in His Essence Holy Love, and ourselves as created in His Image, and our end that we may become like unto Him, it follows that on His part, in accord with His beneficent purpose, He will make Himself known to us, and on our part that we shall be so constituted as to be capable of receiving His Self-revelation and responding to His advances. A capacity on His part to communicate and on ours to receive the communication is of the very essence of Religion and its natural presupposition. We thus approach the problem of Divine Revelation with certain presuppositions which are the inevitable outcome of our "world-view" as religious people. We rightly assume the possibility and are justified in stating the probability of a Divine disclosure and a providential rulership of the universe and all human life for a Divinely ordained end, which itself has been the subject of Revelation in accordance with our growing powers of receptivity and is further governed and conditioned by these.

So far all is clear. Grant the assumptions of the religious life and the inferences deduced from religious experience, apart from the question of the legitimacy or otherwise of such inferences and their ultimate validity, and we have room



for a reasonable belief in a Divine Revelation. Difficulties arise when we go on further to consider the *method* of Divine Revelation, its exact content, the validity of its claim to be regarded as a communication from on high and not earth-born, and its relation to our finite experience. The problem becomes still more complicated when we seek to distinguish Divine Revelation in general and the special Revelation of GOD in Christ Jesus, and when further we proceed to discuss this last in relation to human reason.

The questions at issue are somewhat as follows :

Do we possess in the Christian teaching a body of truth which could not have been reached by man's unaided natural reasoning ? If so, in what precisely does it consist and what is its claim to authoritative acceptance ? Is the Christian Revelation in irreconcilable conflict with the conclusions reached by human thought concerning GOD, Freedom, and Immortality ? Further, are we to acquiesce in the position that GOD's revelation of Himself in and through an historic Person is one beyond our finite understanding ? Are there truths about Himself and His relation to the world which, though revealed, are none the less beyond the grasp of our finite minds and end in mystery ? Is this appeal to mystery an acknowledgment of intellectual bankruptcy, or does it not itself carry with it a denial of the revelation, since *ex hypothesi* a revelation can only be made subject to the capacity of the recipient, and the latter's failure to grasp it proves that it has not really been made ? Again, as regards the method of revelation, can we claim to know by supernatural agency something we confess to be unknowable by natural means ? Is Christianity the result of a normal evolution in ethical and spiritual thought, its origin, its progress, perfectly explicable on purely naturalistic lines, or are we forced to see in it unmistakable evidence of a special supernatural activity on God's part at a certain point in history—a Divine impartation and self-disclosure to human reason necessitated by the course of human history and the disastrous results of man's sin ? Generally, are we to confine Divine Revelation in this special sense to Christianity, or are we to see in this the

culmination of a progressive revelation on God's part "at sundry times and in divers manners in time past . . . and now in His Son"? More particularly, are we to look for the content of this Revelation in a book, or in a society, the Church? Is it confined to either and incapable of further addition? Is the activity of human reason doomed to a continuous effort to understand the meaning of a revealed truth once given, with no possibility of superseding it by fresh discovery? What are we to say to the claim of Christianity to finality? Can no future progress in human thought and advancing knowledge ever supersede the knowledge of God we now possess as the result of the Incarnation? Is the absolute character of the Christian Revelation such that no future self-disclosure on God's part can ever alter in any crucial point what Christ has told us concerning Him? The finality of the Christian truth is the point at issue. Are we to acquiesce in the relativity of knowledge in every other department of thought and yet rule out Christian Revelation as exempt from the law of relativity, thus postulating a kind of Newtonian absolutism for Christianity in the sphere of revealed religion? If so, upon what grounds? Is it conceivable that we are justified in thus mortgaging the future in this way when in every other department of thought advancing knowledge is continually upsetting our conclusions, casting our absolutes back into the melting-pot and forcing us to abandon our outworn hypotheses in the light of fresh discoveries? Is the supernatural sanction of Christianity so sure and irrefutable as to exempt it from the law of change?

Such are some of the questions raised and the issues at stake in the consideration of the concept of Divine Revelation and the claim put forward by some for Christianity that in it is contained a body of revealed truth reason must accept and a finality nothing can upset.

## II

We shall best approach the problem by a consideration of Divine Revelation in general and the method of it in the light

of religious experience. We can then go on to consider special Revelation and the Christian claims.

The concept of Divine Revelation arises historically in connexion with the question of the conditions of knowledge in general and the whole problem of epistemology. Scepticism as to the power of human reason to attain to absolute truth paved the way to the conception of a Divine Revelation which should aid reason in the search for reality. Divine Revelation was thus regarded as an additional method of gaining knowledge and a new source of enlightenment when the finite mind despaired of finding the truth. Man's need was God's opportunity. Hence the belief in Divine Revelation as supplementing human effort, and this distinction and demarcation between reason and revelation led, as we shall see, to disastrous results. It is not our purpose to tabulate the theories of knowledge which have been held in the past, or to discuss the philosophical problem from this standpoint. It will be sufficient if we just note that in the search for the universally valid knowledge,<sup>1</sup> some of the best thinkers grounded their hopes upon the conviction that God had implanted right knowledge in the soul of man, and that therefore it was within the grasp of finite beings in communion with the Supreme Being to discover in experience the truth they were seeking.

Attention has been drawn to the significance of human personality in this connexion and the enhanced value that became attached to it as the vehicle, if not the embodiment, of the Divine world-reason. Admiration for the great men of the past, amounting to veneration and even to deification, was one of the results of this belief, and Windelband suggests that this same motive appears in grandest form as a power in the world's history, in the stupendous, overpowering impression of the personality of Jesus. This psychological motive, he thinks, "justified itself to theory by the consideration that the admired personality was regarded, in teaching and life, as a revelation of the Divine World-reason. The metaphysical and epistemological bases for this were given in Platonism and especially in Stoicism. Attachment to the

<sup>1</sup> Plato's *Episteme*.

Platonic doctrine that knowledge is recollection, with the turn [of thought] already expressed in Cicero that right knowledge is implanted by God in the soul, is innate within it, the carrying out of the Stoic *logos* doctrine, and of the idea contained in it that the rational part of the soul is a consubstantial emanation from the Divine World-reason,—all this led to regarding every form of right knowledge as a kind of Divine revelation in man. All knowledge is, as Numenius said, ‘the kindling of the small light from the great light which illumines the world.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

We thus reach the conception of universal Divine Revelation and the Johannine thought of the Light which lighteth every man coming into the world. This belief is of the very nerve of all true religion. God has not left Himself without a witness. We are familiar with the way in which the early Christian Apologists sought to make use of this idea of the *Logos spermatikos* in their efforts to commend Christianity as the true and highest philosophy and to show that the Word made flesh was the culminating revelation, the final crown to a long process of Divine self-disclosure in and to the nature of man made in the image of God. The Christian Revelation from this point of view is eminently reasonable. Reason itself has taught and guided men in past ages, and is now revealed in the Incarnate *Logos*. Knowledge gained by human reason is seen to have been in reality knowledge from the Supreme Reason, who at last reveals Himself in human form as the true teacher and guide. The Christian Apologist, from this standpoint, could proclaim Christianity as the final and perfect Revelation and maintain that philosophers had not found the full truth, because they had not been willing or able to learn God from God Himself.<sup>2</sup> The idea of a special revelation arises as the results of man’s growing sense of his own blindness, due to ignorance and sin, and also to the religious need for Divine help and salvation. Hence the necessity, over and above the light of reason, for some Divine illumination and Divine intervention in the affairs of men.

Again, the precise relation between reason and revelation

<sup>1</sup> *History of Philosophy*, p. 223.    <sup>2</sup> Windelband, *op. cit.*, p. 224 *passim*.

had to be faced, and in the effort to define the boundaries between revelation and natural knowledge the possibility of opposition between the two gave rise to a theory of revelation which refused to identify the one with the other, and tended to regard the content of revelation as above and contrary to reason. The search after authority in religion played a most important part in the working-out of theories of revelation, and it is most interesting to notice in this connexion a clear line of divergence between the development of the doctrine of revelation in Christianity and Hellenistic philosophy. The contrast is admirably drawn out by Windelband, who maintains that, whilst the Church was guided by its principle of tradition and historically accredited authority in working out its theory of revelation, the development of the doctrine in the Hellenistic philosophy took an entirely different direction.

“The proof from prophecy,” he says, “which became so extraordinarily important for the further development of theology, arose accordingly from the need of finding a criterion for distinguishing true and false revelation. Since man is denied knowledge of the future through natural processes of cognition, the fulfilled predictions of the prophets serve as marks of the *inspiration*, by means of which they have propounded their doctrines. . . . According to the doctrine of the Church . . . Old and New Testaments stand in the following connexion: the same one God has revealed Himself in the course of time to man in a constantly higher and purer manner, corresponding to the degree of man’s receptive capacity; to the entire race He reveals Himself in the rational nature, which, to be sure, may be misused; to the people of Israel, in the strict law of Moses; to entire humanity again, in the law of love and freedom which Jesus announced. In this connected *succession of prophets* there is thus developed the *Divine plan of education* according to which the revelations of the Old Testament are to be regarded as preparations for the New, which in turn confirms them. Here, too, in patristic literature, the fulfilment of prophecies is regarded as the connecting link between the different phases of revelation.

“These are the forms of thought in which the Divine revelation became fixed for the Christian Church as *historical*



*authority.* But the fundamental psychological power which was active in this process remained, nevertheless, devotion in faith to the person of Jesus, who, as the sum-total of Divine revelation, formed the centre of Christian life."

This, then, according to Windelband, is the way in which the theory of revelation as historical authority arose in the Christian Church.

Now contrast this with the development of the doctrine of revelation in the Hellenistic philosophy :

" Here," says our author, " the scientific movement lacked the living connexion with the Church community, and therefore the support of a historical authority ; here, therefore, revelation, which was demanded as a supplement for the natural faculties of knowledge, must be sought in an *immediate illumination of the individual by the Deity*. On this account revelation is here held to be a *supra-rational apprehension of Divine truth*, an apprehension which the *individual man* comes to possess in immediate contact (*ἀφ᾽ἡ*) with the Deity itself ; and though it must be admitted that there are but few who attain to this, and that even these attain only in rare moments, a definite, historically authenticated, special revelation, authoritative for all, is nevertheless here put aside. This conception of revelation was later called the mystic conception, and to this extent *Neo-Platonism is the source of all later mysticism.*"

Windelband proceeds to show that the origins of this conception are to be sought in Philo, who held that knowledge of the Supreme Being is unity of life with Him—immediate contact. The mind that wishes to behold God must *itself become God*. The Divine revelation is in fact a state of ecstasy, the possession of the Deity, a unity of life with Him, a deification of man. Christianity, then, and Neo-Platonism part company in their theories of revelation and inspiration.

" In the former, Divine revelation is fixed as historical authority ; in the latter, it is the process in which the individual man, freed from all eternal relation, sinks into the Divine original Ground. The former is for the Middle Ages the source of *Scholasticism* ; the latter, that of *Mysticism.*"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> pp. 227-9.

Now, our study of the postulates of Divine Transcendence and Divine Immanence enables us to rule out finally this concept of human deification as the method of Divine Revelation. We have not to suppose that man's knowledge of God is obtained by any such identification of the human with the Divine as is suggested by the ideal of a false Mysticism which finds its end in the culmination of a process of absorption of the human by the Divine. Man does not need to become God in any pantheistic sense in order to know Him. The conditions of adequate knowledge are secured when we have a relationship between God and man, made possible by the fact of kinship and affinity, due to creation. Because man is made in the image of God, there must be in his nature something akin to the Divine, and in this lies the possibility of communion between himself and his Maker, and consequently the possibility of a communication from God to man. Such is the nature of the relationship between Personality, human and Divine, in religious experience that all theories of inspiration which overlook man's relative but none the less, within clearly defined limits, real freedom must be rejected. Any theory of revelation which involves a violation on God's part of man's freedom and reduces Divine Grace from a moral relationship between Persons to a mechanical and non-moral use of the human as a medium for the Divine Self-disclosure is self-condemned.

The mechanical theory of inspiration, the idea of a body of Divine Truth dictated from Heaven and written down in book form, is no longer tenable. The claim of infallibility for the Bible on these lines has been shattered once for all, and with it have gone also the claims put forward for other sacred books. A dictation theory of Inspiration is the very negation of the idea of Inspiration as in its essence a relationship between the Divine Spirit of God and the human spirit of man. The claim for sacred literature that it derives from a Divine Source must ultimately rest upon the belief that the authors themselves, not the books they wrote, were in contact with God. We claim inspiration for a person, not a thing. The Scriptures themselves make no claim to

infallibility, are palpably defective in many respects, contain errors inconceivable on the hypothesis of Divine dictation, and clearly reveal the human element which we have come to recognize as inevitable in all the relationship between the free created personality of man and the God who created him.

The rejection of the mechanical conception of Inspiration has paved the way for the doctrine of degrees of inspiration as the result of a more subtle investigation into the conditions governing the relationship between God and man. The psychology of religious experience has been called in, in the effort to differentiate between what is human and what is Divine in the phenomenon of Inspiration. How far these elaborate analyses have succeeded is very doubtful. We have come, however, to see that the human in contact with the Divine may be wonderfully elevated, strengthened, and refreshed, and thus enabled to be a purer and better medium for the Divine Revelation than if left in its natural and sinful state. Human faculties without being superseded or overridden by the Divine Spirit can be so stimulated and influenced as to function as suitable media for Divine messages. Again, individuals may differ vastly as channels for Divine Grace. As a fact of history we know that in every age men have been taught of God, and He has made some the vehicles of a Divine Revelation by a principle of Election, inscrutable indeed to us, but clearly discernible in the history of mankind. Chosen men, selected nations—these have been God's messengers, and we have instinctively assigned to them a greater degree of inspiration than we should claim for ourselves. In no race has God left Himself without a witness. The fact that some human personalities have in intercourse with the Father of all spirits achieved a fuller measure of Divine enlightenment and thus been enabled to communicate to their brethren a richer knowledge of the things of God is in itself a phenomenon in the history of religions which cannot be ignored, and to which we may quite legitimately point as evidence of Divine Revelation through Inspiration without committing ourselves to any clear-cut theory to account for or attempt

to define precisely the conditions under which such Divine Self-revelation has been achieved.

The late Professor Marcus Dods, in an article on "Inspiration," to which we are indebted, has given a beautiful description of the process of Inspiration as he conceives it, primarily as a spiritual gift and only secondarily as a mental one.

"Inspiration operates as any newborn passion, such as maternal love, operates. It does not lift the person out of all limitations, but it seizes upon and uses all the faculties, elevating, refining, and directing to one purpose. It illuminates the mind as enthusiasm does, by stimulating and elevating it; it enriches the memory as love does, by intensifying the interest in a certain object, and by making the mind sensitive to its impressions and retentive of them. It brings light to the understanding and wisdom to the spirit, as purity of intention or a high aim in life does. It brings a man into sympathy with the nature and purposes of God, enables him to see God where others do not see Him, and to interpret His revelations in the same Spirit in which they are given."

We reach, then, these positions:

1. That the true purpose of Divine Revelation must be construed in the light of the Christian "world-view," involving as this does a philosophy of history defined as teleological and anthropocentric. The whole of history is read in the light of a Divine educative purpose for the human race, and room is found in this for a special authoritative Revelation through chosen channels, according to a Divine Election and culminating in the Incarnation and redemptive work of Jesus Christ.
2. That a Divine Revelation is possible and probable in the sense of a direct communication between God and man, and an activity on His part in Divine Self-disclosure and communication with us, is the necessary condition of any discovery on our part of His existence and purpose.
3. That such Divine Revelation takes place pre-eminently in the realm of human life. It is essentially a disclosure of a Person to persons. The substance of the disclosure may

become embodied as a written record in a book or books in religious literature, which consequently, in a sense, may be spoken of as derived ultimately from a Divine source.

4. That no claim to infallibility either for persons or for written records can be substantiated. The conditions for a Divine Self-disclosure to the human personalities are such as to preclude the possibility of infallible truth being transmitted from God to man unpolluted by human error. In every case the Divine Self-revelation is conditioned and limited by the capacity of the recipient and the imperfections of the medium through which it is made. The human element in all Revelation must destroy any claim to unquestioned infallibility.

5. That Revelation regarded as the action of the Divine Spirit upon the spirit of man must not in any sense be taken as involving a violation of the human personality or such an overriding of its freedom as to reduce the human to the level of a mechanical instrument through which the Divine functions. Inspiration at its highest is the human freely and lovingly re-thinking God's thoughts after Him, and thus revealing and interpreting Him to others.

6. That the antithesis between Natural and Revealed Religion is a false one. All human thought about God is in a sense the result of the functioning of the immanent Divine Spirit in the world and in human life. Within the wider process of general Revelation there is room for special Revelation through chosen and selected channels, in accordance with the Divine purpose in the government of the world and God's providential guidance in human history.

Thus the purpose of Revelation is to be construed primarily in the light of God's educative purpose for the world and for mankind. It is thus a part of the larger philosophy of history which reads the whole drama of the world's events as part of a Divine Plan with a redemptive purpose centring in man and the salvation of the human race. Here the Christian "world-view" parts company with the Greek naturalistic conceptions. Whereas for Greek thought the cosmic process may be construed apart from *man's* destiny, for the Christian



the whole of history is teleology, essentially anthropocentric, viewing man as the end and aim of creation, Nature and Nature's processes as subservient to man's needs. In and through the course of the world's events God is working His purpose out. Windelband points to this as the distinguishing feature of the Christian outlook in contrast to that of Neo-Platonism.

In contrast to Greek thought on the subject of the philosophy of history—

"Christianity," he writes, "found from the beginning the essence of the whole world-movement in the *experiences of personalities* : for it external nature was but a theatre for the development of the relation of person to person, and especially of the relation of the finite spirit to the Deity. And to this were added, as a further determining power, the principle of love, the consciousness of the solidarity of the human race, the deep conviction of the universal sinfulness, and the faith in a common redemption. All this led to regarding the history of the fall and of redemption as the true metaphysical import of the world's reality, and so instead of an eternal process of Nature, the drama of *universal* history as an onward flow of events that were activities of freewill, become the content of Christian metaphysics.

"There is perhaps no better proof of the power of the impression which the personality of *Jesus of Nazareth* had left, than the fact that all doctrines of Christianity, however widely they may otherwise diverge philosophically or mythically, are yet at one in seeking in him and his appearance the *centre of the world's history*. By him the conflict between good and evil, between light and darkness, is decided. . . . With almost all Christian thinkers, accordingly, the world's history appears as a course of inner events which draw after them the origin and fortunes of the world of sense—a course which takes place *once for all*. It is essentially only Origen who holds fast to the fundamental character of Greek science so far as to teach the eternity of the world-process."<sup>1</sup>

It behoves us to weigh well the significance of this contrast between the Greek and the Christian world-view. Herein lies the real basis for a doctrine of special Revelation and the

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 256-7.

distinctive teaching of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation—a doctrine which, once accepted, carries with it implications involving, as we have seen, a revolution in the whole outlook upon the meaning and significance of the world's history in relation to God and His providential government. The Christian world-view is distinctive, and it must inevitably issue in a Christian philosophy in which alone the concept of Divine Revelation, universal and special, can find a true home and a natural setting.

If we believe that God is the Creator of the world and that man is created in His image for a definite Divine purpose of love ; if, further, we accept the fact of human sin in its true significance in relation to God as rebellion and self-will—a misuse of a conferred freedom granted as the *sine qua non* of a true ethical and spiritual development on the part of men made in the likeness of God and destined to become the sons of God ; if, again, we believe in God's providential guidance in the world's history, in the life of the whole human race and His loving care for the education and development of the finite individual, we cannot doubt but that in and through the whole historic process God will be active, and that in all the long struggle of the human race towards an ideal of truth, goodness, and beauty, God's Presence in Divine Grace will be granted in ever-increasing measure, and His Light be vouchsafed to the sons of men according to their need and their capacity to receive His Revelation. Taught by Him, they will learn to read His message in Nature, in history and in human life, not less in the commonplace events of a daily routine than in the more intimate communings of the human soul in its best moments of prayer and elevated thought. Man's whole growth in knowledge will be itself a revelation of the Divine Truth—his whole growth in grace a revelation of the Divine Holy Love of One who is about our path and about our bed, who marks our downsitteing and uprising and our thoughts long before.

All this is involved in the Christian outlook upon life which can regard Divine Revelation as pre-eminently reasonable—the natural outcome of God's Love in Self-disclosure and in

redemptive activity. That He should wait with an infinite patience for the developing capacity of His children to apprehend His Presence and understand His messages ; that He should disclose Himself in fuller measure as time went on ; that He should speak by divers portions and in divers manners, through Hebrew prophet, Greek sage, and Roman statesman, as men were able to assimilate the Word, and finally, in the fullness of time, *in His Son*—all this, in its true setting, is a phenomenon, natural and rational, to the mind and heart of any man who seeks to do justice to that religious nature which is his by right of creation and responding to which he finds himself in the deepest recesses of his being at one with Reality.

### III

Many difficulties can be avoided if we keep steadily before us the reality of a personal relationship between God and man as the condition (*a*) of Divine Revelation, (*b*) of man's Inspiration, and consequently (*c*) of man's discovery regarding God, Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and the meaning, value, and destiny of human life. The conditions of such a relationship exclude any idea of man's deification as the *sine qua non* of Divine Revelation. The truth in this conception lies in the fact that man's approximation to the likeness of God in spiritual communion and ethical achievement enables him the more clearly and fully to disclose to his fellow-men the revelation of Himself which God is continually making in and to human personalities in living union with Himself. The human is not in any sense a passive instrument for the transmission of the Divine message or an impersonal pipe through which the Divine Truth is poured. There is a close personal co-operation between man and God which involves limitations on the part of both: on God's side the fact that His Self-disclosure must be such as the human can receive and in such terms as the human can assimilate ; on man's side the fact that the reception of the Divine Self-revelation is conditioned all through by the state of heart and mind and will of the man himself in relation to the Divine. Hence only the

pure in heart can see God, and the Vision which the man strives to behold in order to transmit it to others is necessarily beclouded by the degree of sinfulness in the man himself in communion with his Maker. Hence the impossibility of any claim to infallibility in the message which the man thinks he has received from God. The truth, in its transmission from the Divine, through the human, to us, has necessarily become coloured by the human medium through which it has had to pass. This discoloration is due to the imperfection of the human medium as sinful, and to the fact that the human medium is limited by an existence in time and space. Hence the Divine Truth when it reaches us has passed through a human personality compelled by its very constitution to think in spatial imagery and to express itself in terms of *human* thought. A large element of symbolism must therefore necessarily enter as a clothing for the Divine Truth as it reaches us. God must in this sense be ever revealing Himself to us in parables, and His parabolic teaching is the only way in which we can be taught whilst here seeing as through a glass darkly and knowing in part. The only criterion of judgment, therefore, which we may legitimately apply to the testing of any truth claiming to be derived from Divine Revelation will be its value as the highest and best view of God and its correspondence to the deepest and truest ethical and spiritual instincts we possess. It will bear, in other words, its own intrinsic worth in itself, and carry with it its own authoritative claim upon the conscience and the religious intuition of men. We have no external test available by which we can differentiate with infallible certainty between the human and the Divine element in any "Revelation," whether it be embodied in a book or in a society, in an ethical code or in a religious experience.

The only test we can apply to Christianity as an historic religion claiming Divine sanction and Divine origin will not be an external authority of a Church, but the authoritative character of the Revelation as standing upon its own intrinsic merits in rivalry with other religions and tested by comparison with other spiritual experience and ethical systems. If the

Christian conception of God and Christian Ethics are held to be the noblest and the purest to be found in the religions which commend themselves to man's acceptance, this will in itself be eloquent testimony to the character of the source whence Christianity claims to have been derived and be in itself a witness to the authoritative character of the Revelation. If it can be shown that the Christian Revelation of God and Christian Ethics fall below the loftiest and purest ethical and spiritual conceptions now known to the world as the result of a comprehensive study of Comparative Religions, then the finality and validity of Christianity in its claim to be of Divine origin, and in its claim to find in Christ Jesus the fullest and crowning Revelation of God to man—God in man made manifest—may be seriously challenged. The Church must be prepared to meet this challenge at any time and itself challenge other religions and their rival claims on these lines. It is a question of the survival of the fittest. The originality, authoritative character, and finality of the Christian message will not be based upon anything external to itself, nor on any appeal to miracles or prophecy as a test of its authentic claim to our acceptance. The one and only test will be its own intrinsic worth, as shown in history and experienced to-day. On the question as to the claims of Christianity to be the only permanent, universal, and final religion for mankind, the writer of the article "Christianity" in Hastings' *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* (Dr. W. T. Davison) points out that no vindication of them can amount to actual demonstration. But the argument, he says—

"would take the direction of enquiring whether history thus far confirms the high claim of Christianity to suffice for the needs of man as man. Is Tertullian's phrase *anima naturaliter Christiana* borne out by facts? . . . Such an argument would have to take full account of criticisms like those of Nietzsche and his school . . . that Christianity profoundly misunderstands human nature and man's position in the Universe; that it amounts, in fact, to a worship of failure and decay. . . . Such objections are sure to recur together with kindred difficulties arising from a naturalistic view of man which claims to be supported by physical science. They



can be effectually repelled only by practical proof that the teaching of Christianity accords with the facts of human nature and meets the needs of human life more completely than any other system of philosophy or religion.

“On the other hand, the triumphs which Christianity has already achieved; the power it has manifested of being able to satisfy new and unexpected claims; the excellence of its ideal of character, one which cannot be transcended so long as human nature continues to be what it is; the success with which it has brought the very highest type of character within the reach of the lowest, as attested by the experience of millions; the power of recovery which it has exhibited, when its teaching has been traduced and its spirit and aims degraded by prominent professors and representatives; these, with other similar characteristics, go far towards proving the Divine origin of Christianity, and its claim to be the perfect religion of humanity, sufficing for all men and for all time.”

We conclude, then, that room can be found in a Christian Philosophy for the concept of Divine Revelation without any violence being done to Reason, and if we bear steadily in mind the essential conditions which must govern the relationship between the human and the Divine, we shall avoid many of the difficulties which in the past have been urged by Reason against theories of Divine Revelation which have been reached as the result of ignoring the human element with disastrous results. A pregnant sentence of Dr. John Oman sums up the point we have tried to emphasize in the elucidation of this Christian postulate of “Divine Revelation,” where he speaks of our being helped to understand what he calls “the patient humanness of God’s Revelation, if we take it to be a dialogue in which God could not speak the next word till man had responded to the last.”

If we think of Divine Revelation through Inspiration as commencing with the first dawning of self-consciousness in man created in the image of God and continued all through as a dialogue between the Living God and the spirit of man, culminating in the Incarnation and the Revelation to man in human form of the Unseen Speaker and continued as an Inner Voice by the same Speaker after His Resurrection

and return as God the Spirit speaking in the hearts of men, we preserve the essence of the Revelation as a relationship between persons, God and man, as a dialogue not conducted primarily by means of written messages, but by living contact of personality, and continued right through the ages and to be continued as the Living God speaks in and to and through man to men. The written Word may embody the substance of the messages conveyed from time to time so far as understood and interpreted by men, but it must be studied in the light of its historical origin and progressive character, and checked from time to time by the light continually being thrown upon it by the *living dialogue* which is still going on between man and God. Present religious experience must be continually applying itself to the interpretation of the written word and the elucidation of its meaning in the light of an ever-advancing knowledge of the Most High, derived not simply, still less solely, from the past, but from the present living contact of the soul with God. The Living Church in all ages will witness in its corporate consciousness to the presence of the Living God in Christ Jesus, and His promise that the Holy Spirit will guide His followers into all truth will be vindicated in that in every age, with the progress of human thought, there will be also a progressive appreciation of the inner essence of Christianity by Christians themselves.

If Höffding is right in claiming for the principle of personality supreme worth in the right estimate of values, the Church is in a real sense the corporate personality of the whole Body of Christ and claims to be the instrument through which the Holy Spirit works both in the interpretation and in the propagation of the revealed truth. The fact that the Holy Spirit has to work through human media rules out, as we have seen, any claim the Church may make to *infallible* truth, but this does not exclude a claim to any authority as the guardian and interpreter of the Revelation of God in Christ Jesus. Such authority as the Church does claim need not fear any argument or test the world may legitimately apply to it. If the intrinsic worth of the message the Church proclaims is its best

witness, this not only substantiates the truth of the Revelation but also in turn reflects back upon the worth of the authority of the Church which claims to possess the deposit of faith. To the extent to which the living Church through the ages and to-day has been governed by One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, to this extent it may claim authority as the Voice of Him in whom all authority ultimately lies. Whether the Church in its interpretation of the truth has or has not succeeded in giving to the world a true insight into Reality, can only be decided by an examination of the actual content of the message it delivers and the work of Christianity in the world. If when this content is criticized and judged at the bar of the highest and noblest idealism of any age, it survives the test and outrivals its rivals, this is at once the vindication of its own intrinsic worth, and evidence at the same time of its claim to be derived from a Divine source and also a witness in substantiation of the authority of the media through which the message is delivered, viz. the Church of the Living God as "the pillar and ground of the Truth."<sup>1</sup>

History justifies this claim in that Christianity in every age has proved itself as a dynamic force and revealed itself as a living activity—the activity of a Living God entering effectively into human life in the Christian consciousness and regenerating human sons by adoption and grace. God's Holy Will in action, in regeneration, and sanctification, is revealed as a matter of history in the ages that are past and in the world to-day. The Christian consciousness points to the Living Christ of experience as the effective entrance of God into human life. God acts in and upon man to-day in Christ Jesus. The Spirit of Christ Jesus to-day animates and controls, guides and directs the religious life of millions who own allegiance to Him, and in prayer and communion are the recipients of His Divine Revelation of Himself and learn of the deep things of God. The greatness of Christ's Personality as God's supreme Revelation of Himself in human life is to be gauged not by its past effects in the history of the world,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iii, 15.

vast as these have been, but also by its present activity and the knowledge we have from a study of history that no past age has succeeded in exhausting the resources of the Christian Faith, and that the fullness of the power of Christ's Person is still a thing not yet revealed. History has shown us the significance of some aspects of Christianity, but it is still in the world a religion, the universality and exhaustless power of which can only be known in the future if, and when, men of every race and tongue bow down in allegiance. The full significance of Christ is yet to be revealed, but history has shown enough to convince us that His Coming in the past cannot be accounted for in any adequate sense as simply one of the human race. His greatness and uniqueness must be judged by the effects of His Personality upon history. The claim of Christianity to be a Divine Revelation centres in the claims made on behalf of Christ by His followers in every age, and these claims may legitimately be put to the test of the fruit of Christianity in the world's life and thought. What has Christianity done in men's lives—what has it effected in the realm of ethical and spiritual values? Whence does it derive its marvellous vitality to-day? It is no dead religion we are studying and no dead Christ with whom we believe that we are dealing. The essence of the religion all through has been a Living Christ, and Christians point to His Presence as the secret of its vitality and seemingly exhaustless powers. If, then, the question be pressed—What precisely is this Christianity for which you claim Divine origin, and which you say is Divine Revelation—in precisely what does its content consist, and what proofs of its supernatural origin do you put forward in justification of so high a claim? we should answer in the words of Dr. Davison who in dealing with the essential character of Christianity says:

“What we see in Christian history, as in the personal history of Christ upon earth, is the progressive development of a Divine Thought unfolding itself in spite of virulent opposition, under pressure of extreme difficulties, struggling against the misrepresentations of false friends and imprinting its likeness upon most unpromising and unsatisfactory material. When



it first appeared on the earth, embodied in the Person and the Work, as well as the teaching of Jesus Christ, the Divine Idea shone with the brightness of a new sun in the spiritual firmament. It was not developed out of Judaism, the Jews were its bitterest opponents ; it was not indebted to Greek philosophic thought or to Roman political science, though afterwards it made use of and powerfully influenced both ; it had nothing in common with the current superstitions of Oriental religions ; it did not owe its origin to some cunningly devised religious syncretism, such as was not uncommon at the time when Christianity began to infuse life into the declining Roman Empire. A new idea of God, of man, and of the true reconciliation of man to God, formed the core and nucleus of the new faith. In the earliest records this idea appears as the germ of a nascent religion, a sketch in outline which remains to be filled up. In the history of nineteen centuries its likeness is to be discerned only as an image reflected in a dimly burnished mirror, in a troubled and turbid pool. None the less the dominant idea remains ; as St. Paul expresses it, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God is seen in a face—the face of Jesus Christ. Lecky, writing simply as a historian of European morals, describes it thus :

“ ‘ It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love ; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions ; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue but the strongest incentive to its practice ; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists.’ ”

“ Whether the spectacle of an ideal human character alone has done this remains to be seen, but it is possible with care to distinguish between the glory of the Divine thought and the imperfect medium through which its light has filtered. We see truth manifested amidst crudities and insincerities, amidst falsehoods which are bad and half-truths which are often worse ; a pure and lofty character struggling, mostly in vain, for adequate expression ; a kingdom not come but coming, of which we cannot say ‘ Lo here,’ or ‘ Lo there,’ for it floats only in the midst of men as they move, in their hearts as they ponder and feel and hope—not as an achievement, not as a



possession, but as a magnificent conception, an earnest longing, and a never fully attained, but ever to be attained, ideal."

This could not be better put and it shows us at a glance the Christian religion as the supreme Revelation of God Himself in human life in the Person of Jesus Christ, revealing in Himself the true goal of all human character, the Ideal Man, and proclaiming as the true goal of all human endeavour God's purpose—the Kingdom of Heaven, the community of the redeemed in Christ Jesus.

So to conclude, again in the words of this able writer :

"The secret of the power of Christianity lies in the conviction which it engenders that—granted the fundamental principles of Theism—God has Himself undertaken the cause of man ; that He enters into man's weakness, feels with his sorrows, and, chiefly, that He bears the terrible burden of man's sins ; all this being assured by the gift of His Son and the work which the Son Himself has accomplished and is still carrying on by His Spirit. The metaphysical nature of Christ's Person may not be capable of being adequately expressed in words ; the full scope of His redeeming work may be variously understood and may be incapable of being condensed into a formula ; while Christians may widely differ as to the way in which the benefits of that work are best appropriated and realized and distributed by His Church in the world. But the essence of the religion lies in its conception of the spiritual needs of man, the ends for which he exists, his sin and failure to realize those ends ; in its proclamation of Christ, the once dying and now ever living Lord as Himself the Way, through whom sin may be forgiven and failure remedied ; and above all, in the moral and spiritual dynamic which is supplied by faith in the great Central Person of the whole religion, and the life in Him which is rendered possible for every believer by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit."

Such is the Christian Revelation, in word and in deed. Such is its essential content, and by that and its results in history it must be judged as to whether it derives from man or from God, whether it is from Heaven or one of earth's natural products.

In spite of all advance in philosophical speculation, experimental psychology, scientific discovery, and increased knowledge in every department of human thought and life, we know of nothing at present to which men can point as a conclusive refutation of the Christian hypothesis. Christianity, then, to-day may submit its claims as a Divine Revelation with serene confidence to Gamaliel's test <sup>1</sup>: "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will be overthrown: but if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow them; lest haply ye be found even to be fighting against God."

<sup>1</sup> Acts v. 38.

## CHAPTER XI

### REVELATION AND INCARNATION

IN the Preface to his published volume of Boyle Lectures, *Studies in Christian Philosophy*, which were delivered at King's College at the time when I was giving my series of lectures at Sion College on "Some Postulates of a Christian Philosophy," Dr. Matthews held out the hope of a treatment (in succeeding courses of lectures) of the subjects of Revelation and Incarnation. Unfortunately, that hope has not yet been realized. I indicated myself in an article in the *Church Quarterly Review*<sup>1</sup> what I thought could be said for the concept of Divine Revelation, and since then the Dean of King's College has partly compensated us for the loss of his promised volume by a treatment in his Liverpool lectures of "The Idea of Revelation." This I reviewed at some length in an article in the *Church Quarterly Review*,<sup>2</sup> and whilst I welcomed Dr. Matthews's attempt to clear up the relations between Philosophy and Religion as full of promise, I indicated at the same time where, in my opinion, all such attempts so far seem to have failed, viz. in the treatment of just these concepts of Revelation and Incarnation which are so vital and central in Christian teaching.

Dr. Matthews summed up the results of an outline historical survey of Revelation in Religious History in the following passage in his Liverpool lectures :

"It is clear," he writes, "that the root idea of revelation is that of the self-disclosure of the unseen Reality . . . [which]

<sup>1</sup> October 1923.

<sup>2</sup> January 1924.

is always conceived as active. God is revealed by His own will. The initiative comes from the Unseen. This is true of all levels of revelational religion. The afflatus comes upon the possessed. The word of the Lord comes to the Prophet. It pleased God to reveal His Son in St. Paul. The concept of revelation involves the presupposition of an unseen Reality, which is personal in the sense that it may truly be said to will. But we may go further. In its original forms revelation is quite obviously always connected with persons. It comes to persons and through persons. It is indeed true that a tendency to depersonalize the conception lurks always in the background; the living concrete revelation in experience, to borrow a phrase of Bergson's, is 'dogged by mechanism,' the idea is constantly drawn away from the sphere of religion to that of magic. In its extreme form this becomes the belief that the actual words of a book or a law are divine. But we may disregard this perversion as belonging to the pathology of religion, which is another name for magic. Even then a twofold complexity seems still to be left in the concept of Revelation. On the one hand, we are led to think of revelation as the imparting of knowledge, and of its gift as the attainment of adequate insight, a clear and satisfactory interpretation of life and the world. But this alone hardly appears to sum up the full meaning of the term. Revelation is not only interpretation, but fact. It stands over against the mind, challenging it to take account of a new reality. This aspect of objective datum is present in all revelation. In Christianity it appears in the acutest form in the estimation of Christ. It is not sufficient for Christianity, as it has existed in the world up to the present, to say that the revelation is the teaching of Christ. It is that, but it is more. It is also the fact of Christ. God is revealed not only in the words of Christ, but in His Person. Thus there would seem to be two elements in a full concept of revelation, corresponding to the two elements of experience. Revelation is interpretation, but it is also datum to be interpreted: the Logos immanent in human minds, and the Word made flesh in Christ." <sup>1</sup>

Having thus determined the meaning of the concept of revelation by reference to its history, Dr. Matthews went on to ask in what sense it is possible to carry over this con-

<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of Revelation*, pp. 22-3.

cept of revelation into the modern world and to commend it to the modern mind.

In our review of Dr. Matthews's stimulating and lucid contribution to this vexed problem of revelation, we pointed out that if we seek to commend the concept of the "Word made flesh" to the modern mind, we must say in what sense we interpret the Incarnation. We must also further ask whether there is room for it in any system of evolutionary Naturalism, whether materially or spiritually interpreted.

Let me put the issue again in the words I used when reviewing Dr. Matthews's work :

"It seems to us that in any of the current evolutionary concepts, the utmost meaning that can be attached to the idea of an Incarnation will be that which regards it as the climax of the Divine immanence. So far as we can judge, this is the conclusion to which Dr. Matthews will be forced to come, if he attempts to carry over the concept of the Word made flesh into any modern philosophical interpretation of the Incarnation. We have the immanent in human minds, and the culmination of such Divine immanence of God in Christ. It is true that along these lines attempts have been made to reconcile Church doctrine with modern evolutionary theories. A place has in this way been found for the fact of Christ in an historical teleology, but at what cost? Only by evacuating the Catholic doctrine of its real meaning. According to the Catholic interpretation the historic fact was not the culmination of the expression of God in finite human lives, however godlike, in a person called Jesus of Nazareth; it was not that God was in Christ as in no other, and that thus a man called Jesus was the vehicle for the climax of God's revelation of Himself in the life of a finite person; it was, on the contrary, something entirely different and poles asunder from any such conception. It was the humiliation of the Son of God Himself, who being Himself God before all worlds, became Man for a soteriological purpose. The difference may be put in a sentence. It is the difference between the manifestation of God *in and through a person's life*, Jesus of Nazareth, and the revelation of God the Son Himself *in a personal life*. The datum in this case is the revelation, but only because He who was thus manifested in time and space was God the Son,



and thus could in His own Person and not through the personal life of another, other than Himself, reveal the inmost nature of God.

"In this case no evolutionary process can explain His appearance nor can room for Him as the Ideal be found in a process taking place in time and presumably working towards Him as its telos. How can the Ideal be actually realized in its completeness in the midst of an historical progress towards it which is not yet finished ?

"To postulate the appearance of the Revealer Himself in the midst of the historical revelation is indeed a staggering proposition, but nothing less than this is involved in the Catholic interpretation of the fact of Christ—the Word made flesh."

In these words I put the issue between Immanence and Incarnation as sharply as possible and, for an elaborate justification of this, I should have again to enter upon a critical investigation of the Christological problem and attempt to justify the Church's belief in the light of modern thought. I must, however, content myself here with a reference to my previous published work *A Study in Christology*,<sup>1</sup> where I have endeavoured to put forward a defence of the ancient Christology and have made an effort at Christological reconstruction in terms of modern thought. In that volume I did my best to distinguish the Catholic conception of the Incarnation from all efforts to explain it merely as the climax of the Divine immanence in a person's life. I showed in what sense it could and in what sense it could not be so regarded. I also strove to substantiate the transcendental element in the Person of Christ, and claimed that ultimately there was something more in the Incarnation than can possibly be embraced in the efforts of our finite minds to grasp it. The Person of Christ, I maintained, baffles our attempts to analyse it and to confine it within the categories of our finite understanding. And if we ask why this must be so, the reason is not far to seek. It is because we are dealing with a supernatural Person—a miraculous

<sup>1</sup> S.P.C.K., 1917.

Christ. In His Person, therefore, the problem of Transcendence and Immanence and the relation between the values suggested by these terms finds its acutest expression and, as I have argued, its true solution. Hence to do justice to the Person of Christ, the Christian thinker must retain the concept of transcendence. His Christian conception of God cannot be expressed in terms of any philosophical system which refuses to retain this concept. Hence arise those peculiar difficulties which confront the theologian in his endeavour to commend Christianity to the modern mind. He must retain in his thought all that is suggested by the concept of transcendence. And he has to do this in face of the fact that so much of modern philosophical speculation moves almost exclusively within the bounds of pure immanentism.

Thus what is in some ways a most promising field for the revival of a genuine appreciation of the essence of Christianity in a philosophical system, the new Idealism associated more particularly with the names of Croce and Gentile is from this point of view doomed in advance if looked to as affording any genuine help to orthodox Christian thinkers, by the simple fact that the whole movement of thought is through and through a virtual suppression of the idea of transcendence. Ruggiero in his *Modern Philosophy* says quite distinctly, in surveying the movement, that—

“with Spaventa is begun implicitly that dissolution of the Hegelian philosophy which is at the same time the construction of a new metaphysic, whose ideal is the full expression of reality in terms of the human spirit, the ideal of the Kantian *a priori* knowledge, to be attained by a resolute denial of all transcendence.

“This is the road whose first stages have been marked out by Croce and Gentile. . . . In them we find Italian philosophy, like the other European philosophies, moving towards a metaphysic of absolute immanence, which can be indifferently described as absolute idealism, and as the true and absolute positivism.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 362.

It is, as we have seen, comparatively easy to find room in modern evolutionary theories for the Incarnation if viewed simply as the climax of the Divine Immanence in one unique individual. It is practically impossible, however, to find a place for "the Word made flesh," if we interpret this strictly in accordance with the Johannine thought as this was finally formulated by the Nicene Fathers in the conflict with Arianism.

It will be remembered that when treating of the concept of Divine Revelation we pointed out the use made by the early Christian Apologists of the idea of the *Logos spermatikos*, and how they tried to show that "the Word made flesh" was the culminating revelation, the final crown to a long process of Divine self-disclosure in and to the nature of man made in the image of God.<sup>1</sup> It is imperative, however, to remind ourselves of the two startling transformations the term "Logos" underwent when it passed from Greek philosophy or Hebrew usage into the full circle of Christian teaching. The fact is that the Johannine thought was really revolutionary in its transformation of the concept. The Divine Reason or Word became man. It was not the case of an impersonal principle exhibited to the maximum degree in a man's life, but of the Word Himself in *personal* communion with God from all eternity becoming personally incarnate at a point in the time-process. The same thought expressed in modern terms gives us the difference between the Incarnation as the climax of the Divine Immanence in a man called Jesus of Nazareth and the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Such an Incarnation could not be conceived of as a particular example of many such which had occurred before the coming of Christ or of other incarnations which might conceivably follow His. We have only to glance at a modern attempt to find room for the thought of incarnation in an evolutionary philosophy to see what this difference really involves.

In his Gifford lectures on "Emergent Evolution" Professor Lloyd Morgan has attempted some refinements and modifica-

<sup>1</sup> pp. 170-1; cf. p. 63 on the Logos-Christology, and the passage quoted from Illingworth on p. 64

tions of Professor Alexander's *Space, Time, and Deity*. We have the suggestion that, given the concept of God as directive Activity of the course of events, a really existent Ideal, independent of our emergent ideals and of the emergent quality of deity, the source of our own existence and of emergent evolution, there is no reason why the "nisus towards deity" on its strictly central line should not culminate in one unique person at the very apex of the pyramid. And "if," says Professor Lloyd Morgan, "an impartial historical survey should lead to the conclusion that the nisus towards deity has culminated in one unique individual, there is, so far as I can see, nothing in the naturalistic interpretation of emergent evolution which precludes the acceptance of this conclusion." <sup>1</sup>

Assuming that Professor Lloyd Morgan in his concept of "God as directive Activity, a really existent Ideal, independent of our emergent ideals and of the emergent quality of deity, the source of our own existence and of emergent evolution," is really trying to do justice to the Christian conception of God as transcendent Creator and Sustainer of all that is, does he mean us to conclude that the "nisus towards deity" which appears in the process of emergent evolution is to culminate in a product of that process or in the appearance of the Producer Himself? If the latter, then we have what the Church believes actually took place. If the former, then we have simply a culmination of God's immanent activity in the personal life of another than Himself, and the relation of the one thus appearing at the very apex of the pyramid to the God who is responsible for the whole movement is left undefined. In any case, we welcome Professor Lloyd Morgan's attempt, as it seems to us, to introduce something in the nature of a transcendental element into a system of philosophy which, like Professor Alexander's, is conceived upon modern evolutionary lines. Certainly Professor Alexander's system of Space, Time, and Deity leaves no room for a Transcendent Deity in any sense in which a Christian theologian could hold it.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

The difficulty, then, of the Christian theologian is to effect a harmony between Transcendence and Immanence. He must retain both concepts, and he must refuse the easier path of achieving intellectual consistency by a denial of Transcendence and a rationalization of the Incarnation in terms of pure Immanence.

It would thus seem that we here reach something in the nature of a deadlock in the effort to clear up the relations between Philosophy and Religion. Modern Philosophy apparently cannot entertain the concept of Transcendence: Christian Theology cannot do without it. Here we reach the parting of the ways. Since I wrote my book on the Christological problem, the difficulties presented by this problem of Divine Transcendence have been forced upon me in ever-increasing measure, first by the privilege I have enjoyed of attending the lectures of my friend Dr. Wildon Carr, to whom I owe such an awakening from my "dogmatic slumbers" as can be detected in this volume, and secondly by the privilege of many conversations with my friend and colleague Mr. Richard Hanson. I venture to think that the issues for Theism have nowhere in recent times found more clear and lucid exposition than in Mr. Hanson's published articles in the *Church Quarterly Review* (Vol. xciv, No. 187; Vol. xcvi, No. 191), and more particularly in the recent Symposium of the Aristotelian Society, in which Mr. Hanson took part, on the Idea of a Transcendent Deity.<sup>1</sup>

Bound up with this concept of Transcendence, as it seems to me, is the whole question of a miraculous Christianity. By it alone can the Christian thinker hope to secure that justice is done to the distinctive character of the Incarnation and its real meaning in an historic teleology. By it, again, must stand or fall the distinctive doctrine of "creation out of nothing," with which the Christian theologian seeks to define the relation of God to the world.

Is there no way out of this *impasse*? It may be said that if modern philosophy can find no room for the Christian

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Concepts of Continuity*, Supplementary Volume of *Proceedings of Aristotelian Society*, pp. 197-240.



conception of the Incarnation and its issue in a doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, and if modern speculative philosophy knows no doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the sense in which the Church presents this dogma, so much the worse for modern philosophy. We may, however, seek to commend our Christian faith to the sympathetic consideration of the thinking world if we can with any measure of success show within the limits of finite reasoning the rationality of the concept of Transcendence. Let us assume, in other words, that ultimately no rationalization of the Christian dogma of the Incarnation is possible. Let us accept the assumption that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity ends in mystery. Let us grant that no satisfactory solution of the problem of creation can be found in the direction in which Christian teaching on that subject leads us. Nonetheless it is possible to show the reasonableness of all these doctrines up to the point where finite reasoning as such seems to fail us, and where faith therefore must make its leap and revelation come to aid us. Let us consider, then, (a) the concept of Transcendence; (b) the concept of Mediation; (c) the concept of Creation *ex nihilo*. We will leave the Christian dogma of the Trinity to a later stage (Chapter XII).

(a) What, then, can be said for the concept of Transcendence?

First, that whilst our knowledge of the Transcendent clearly can only be a knowledge of its immanent activities, nonetheless it is the Transcendent that is immanently active, and it ought therefore to be possible from our examination of this immanent activity to discover such characteristics as seem to point to the Transcendent or which irresistibly drive us to the Transcendent for an adequate explanation. The sense of transcendence in things immanent is what we are feeling after as a justification for our inference from the phenomenal to the noumenal world. Where is it to be found, and what are its distinguishing marks?

In one sense our question might be taken to mean in theological terms—What is the evidence for the existence of God, and to what would you point in the world and in human

life as proof of His character and purpose? And the answer would cover the whole field of Christian Apologetic. But this is not our purpose. We are concerned to vindicate so far as possible the concept of Transcendence in face of a purely immanentist philosophy which professes to have no need of any such hypothesis. Our question rather is this—What are the marks of the Supernatural to which we may point as evidence of its presence in the Natural; or more particularly, if the Incarnation represents an “invasion” of the natural by the supernatural, to what in Christ’s life and work should we point as a justification for such a belief? To ask this question is to find ourselves at once in the thick of a discussion as to what significance we attach to the concept of “values.” If values are any true key to the nature of ultimate Reality, then we can infer from their presence in our finite lives something of the significance and worth of the finite, and something of the character of the infinite.

Thus if we agree provisionally with Dr. Bosanquet that “the finite self is plainly a partial world, yet possesses within it the principle of infinity, taken in the sense of the *nisus* towards absolute unity and self-completion,” or with Professor Pringle-Pattison that man is “a finite-infinite being, conscious of finitude only through the presence of an infinite nature within him,” and if, further, we resist what he aptly describes as “the almost incorrigible tendency of human thought to interpret the relation of appearance and reality as one of opposition or negation,” and accept his contention that “reality is known through its appearance or manifestation, the phenomenon is the noumenon so far as it has manifested itself,” then we are in a position to claim that our very impulse towards the supreme values, Beauty, Truth, and Goodness, is in itself a witness that we have “sensed” the Supernatural in the Natural or stumbled upon the tract here in our mundane world of a larger supra-mundane sphere, a world which, whilst inexhaustible by any finite mind, is not inaccessible, but which in its immanent manifestations in and to our finite selves Itself points us to its transcendent character.

I should like, in this connexion, to avail myself of a valuable paper contributed by Mr. Clutton Brock to the *Pilgrim*<sup>1</sup> on "The Sense of Transcendence." What we do value, he says, is not life itself, nor quantity of life, but quality; and the word "quality" implies a standard of value not in life itself, but one which still we apply to life, whether it be our own or the life of the human race. This, he contends, is "the result of the sense of transcendence. For the quality of life that we value and aim at is a quality that no men have ever achieved or experienced." And again, "our very impulse towards truth is the scent, as it were, for the larger truth undiscovered, by which we measure, because of which we value, all truths discovered. And so we value all actual righteousness as part of a larger righteousness never yet achieved. It is not that we do not value the actual righteousness or truth in themselves; there is a wrong notion of transcendence, that it is something utterly 'remote from the sphere of our sorrow,' something which makes all actual things nothing to us. That is untrue, as we can discover by the observation of our own minds. It is the sense of transcendence that makes us value excellence in actual things, as being, not remote from the transcendent, but examples of that sense—as having, indeed, some of the very quality of the transcendent." So he proceeds to define theology as "the sense of the transcendent become conscious of itself, affirming itself and the reality of its own subject."

So we reach the position of contending with Professor Pringle-Pattison that "the presence of the Ideal is the reality of God within us," and maintaining therefore that whilst it is *Deus immanens* whom we know, it is nonetheless God Transcendent who makes Himself known to us.

It must be borne in mind all through that we are not here contending for a sheer Transcendence as such and unrelated. This would simply carry us back to a discredited Deism. Nor are we accepting a pure Immanence, which, again, would lead us to some form of Pantheism. We are, on the contrary, pleading for the truth contained in both concepts, a truth

<sup>1</sup> No. 2, January 1921.

which only appears when we take the two terms as correlative. God is immanent in the world and in human life ; *therefore* God must be transcendent.

As against Deism and Pantheism, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity seeks to conserve all that is valuable in both Transcendence and Immanence regarded as correlative terms. The doctrine of the Incarnation is here claimed by the Christian thinker as the key by which he endeavours to solve the problem of God as Sovereign Absolute and yet intimately related to the world of created spirits ; or to put the same problem as philosophy presents it, the relation between the One and the Many. The dogma of the God-Man is the contribution of Christianity to this problem, and it offers us the rich concept of Mediation as a key. It is this doctrine of Mediation which is at once the glory of the whole system of Christian thought and at the same time that which makes it next to impossible to win for Christianity any widespread acceptance in strictly philosophical circles.

(b) What can be said for this concept of Mediation ?

I do not know that the weak spots in the conception have been better indicated than in the work of Dr. Tollinton to which I have frequently referred and the value of which I have come more and more to appreciate as the result of further reflection and study of the subject. Whilst Dr. Tollinton fully appreciates the wonderful use to which the great Christian thinkers of the Early Church put the Logos-Christology as the Christian solution of the problem of mediation, the attempt to bridge the gulf between " the One and the Many, between Being and Becoming, between the motionless, self-contained quiescence of eternal Reality and the ever-shifting flux of Nature and the Mind of Man,"<sup>1</sup> nonetheless he is careful to remind us that the concept of mediation does not really solve the difficulty of the relations of the Absolute. After referring to other examples of mediation, such as the Ideas of Plato, the developed Angelology of later Post-Canonical Jewish literature, the Stoic Logoi, the Æons of Gnosticism<sup>2</sup>, and above all, the doctrine of the Logos,

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p 337.

which he rightly claims as the most far-reaching and widely diffused theory of mediation to which religious philosophy has ever attained, he goes on to point out that—

“in any system that is severely logical such intermediate agencies do not really help. The initial problem remains as it was, for though the stages of mediation be as numerous and gradual as they were in the most elaborate of the Gnostic systems, still the emergence of the Eternal from its proper state of absolute being into relativity remains, at whatever point we place it, a riddle only soluble by the acceptance of antinomies and contradictions.”

Whilst Dr. Tollinton is careful to add that “what is logically without solution is sometimes a commonplace of spiritual experience,” and that “if men know anything of God, they know that He is far and near at once,” or, as Clement of Alexandria put it, “what is ontologically distant is dynamically near,” and though he further reassures us by the reminder that “though every theory of revelation has its weaknesses, the fact of it is as old and enduring as Religion,” nevertheless this appeal to religious experience against logic is, we feel, a virtual abandonment of the attempt to justify the concept of mediation at the bar of reason.

Let us note carefully the special weak points in the Christian theory of mediation to which Dr. Tollinton further calls our attention :

“The Logos,” he writes, “. . . is the Mediator between God and the Cosmos, the intermediate condition of there being any Cosmos in existence. Now, it is sufficiently obvious that if God in His intrinsic nature is unknowable and unrelated, and if it is through the Logos that He creates a world in time and space, and enters into fellowship with the finite and the transient, the Logos must be capable of activities which are incompatible with the nature of absolute Deity.

“Mediation, therefore, involves some degree and phase of subordination. This is an inherent difficulty of all theologies, which attempt to harmonize Immanence with Transcendence, the related with the absolute conceptions of Deity.”



Can these difficulties be met? To answer the question would take us far back into the history of Christian doctrine and involve us in an examination of the Gnostic speculations which reveal the acuteness of the problem and the attempted solutions in Sabellianism, which sought to explain the distinction as merely "economic," and Arianism, which frankly accepted the consequences of subordination, reducing the Son to the status of a creature. The Nicene Fathers insisted upon the *Homoousion* as the true interpretation of the Person of Christ, but in doing so, men like Athanasius virtually abandoned the element of "subordination" and thus left the problem from another point of view unsolved. For, as Dr. Tollinton shows, "if the Logos can do what the Sovereign and unoriginate Godhead is debarred by His own nature from undertaking without an intermediate Agent, differences of nature, and not alone of function, seem at once to be involved."

If with Chalcedonian Christology we deny, as against Arianism, differences of nature, and claim that the Mediator is of one substance with the Father as touching His Godhead, of one substance with us as touching His Manhood, we only succeed in solving the problem of perfect mediation by raising a further problem, namely, the exact sense in which we can speak of the Deity of Christ. This again leads us to a doctrine of the Trinity as well as to a Christological problem.

We have to admit that both lead to "mystery," and we certainly try the patience of our philosophical friends by postulating one mystery to solve another, and offering this in its turn as the "solution" of yet a third mystery, so that the gibe "*omnia exeunt in mysterium*" is not inaptly or unjustly applied to us.

How hardly pressed the Church really was in the effort to win the philosophical world to the allegiance of Christ is shown if only by the simple fact to which Wicksteed draws our attention in his work on *The Reactions between Dogma and Philosophy*, viz. that whereas in Christology the Church attempted to find the unity in the "person" and the distinctions in the "natures"; when we pass to the problem

of the Trinity, the distinctions are sought in the "persons," whilst the unity is found in the "nature," "One 'person' in two Natures"; "three 'persons' in One God."

We need not, of course, regard this use or, if you will, this abuse, of language as fatal to the validity of the Christian conceptions. All it need mean is that the richness of content in the Christian conceptions made it difficult, if not impossible, of expression within the categories of finite human thought.

It is tempting to pursue this problem in the realm of Christian doctrine. It would carry us far into the discussion of the Trinitarian problem and of modern efforts at Christological reconstruction. For our immediate purpose, however, we must content ourselves with a brief glance at the dangers of the Logos-Christology as these are admirably summarized for us by Dr. Tollinton. We need only to note that (i) at the close of the second century there were not a few who felt that the conception of the Logos might be so largely employed as to disturb the interior balance of the triune Godhead. Such were the "Alogi" of Asia Minor, or those other teachers, mentioned by Irenæus, who rejected the Fourth Gospel. (ii) All Monarchian, Sabellian, and Patripassian Schools owed their existence to a reaction from Logos-Christology. (iii) The wide activities assigned to the Logos leave the other Persons of the Godhead with a very meagre rôle. "Father" is little more than the transcendently Existent, the pure Being of Plato, the Absolute of later Philosophy. He is represented fully and adequately in the Logos. The Sovereign Godhead is absentee. Finite intelligence may not reach Him. Finite things He may not touch. It is only by Deputy that He enters our world of time and sense. (iv) And if it is so with the Father, what of the Spirit? The Mission of the Comforter is unnecessary, for the Logos is everywhere. A Duality, not a Trinity, is the logical outcome.

No one at all intimately acquainted with the history of Christian doctrine will deny that these dangers of the Logos-Christology, as thus summarized by Dr. Tollinton, have been very real ones, nor do we wish to assert that the Church has altogether successfully avoided them in the formulation

of a Christian theology. What we can say is that with a full cognizance of these dangers, Christian thinkers have, nonetheless, continued to defend the concept of mediation as still the most fruitful and suggestive postulate in the effort to harmonize Transcendence and Immanence.

(c) What can be said for the concept of Creation *ex nihilo*?

We are in no better case, it would seem, with the problem of Creation. The Christian dogma of Creation *ex nihilo* is beset with all kinds of difficulties from the intellectual standpoint, and we have seen that human analogies derived from our own experience of what we call "creative activity" fail us completely in our efforts to imagine the act by which God freely brought into being and so conferred reality upon a universe other than Himself and which but for His act could have had no reality at all. The Christian rejects an emanation theory, by which God is imagined as producing from His own substance a world external to Himself. Moreover, we cannot postulate creation as a necessity of His Being or Essence. Our Christian conception of God is that of One who is at once Eternal Activity and Eternal Repose, changeless yet Himself the author of a world in which change is the name we give to the whole process of creative evolution. He has in Himself an inexhaustible fountain of possibilities, new beginnings, new revelations. We can set no limit to the wonders of His creative activity or the richness of His divine designs. Ultimately, however, He is to be thought of as quite independent of that particular aspect of His creative activity by which the worlds we know were made and by which they are being sustained, and by which, again, life was and is being given to the sons of men.

Had this activity not produced the world and us, God would still, we believe, have remained what He is in Himself with His Perfection unimpaired, since it is not bound up with the origin and end of man. According to Aquinas, God is absolutely Self-sufficing. Creation was no necessity of His Being. What we can say is that a dictate of His Goodness and Wisdom found expression in creation. On these premises we have to admit that God was free not to

create, and we cannot find a reason for creation in any necessity of His Being which would make the world as necessary to Him as He is to us. The doctrine, again, of "eternal creation" is rejected because in Christian belief the world had a beginning in time. We can find some relief to thought in Augustine's suggestion that the world was created *cum tempore non in tempore*, that God did not create the world at a given point in a time-series, but created time with the creation of the world. But even if in these directions we can answer objections to the Christian dogma, we are finally obliged to admit that our finite imagination can form no idea whatsoever of the *How* of God's Creation, if only for the simple reason that our knowledge of the process of creative activity derived from our own nature as "created creators" fails us utterly when we try to conceive of God creating out of things which were not, something which came to possess a conferred reality. All we know of creation is what we call "change." We can only act, i.e., upon previously existing, and in some sense "prepared," material. There was, however, no previously existing "eternal matter" upon which God set to work to produce His world. He created it *ex nihilo*. We must either, therefore, ourselves cease to use the word "creation" as applied to our own activities, or invent some other word to express that act by which God creates. To use the same word to apply to both acts, that of us human beings and that of God Himself, is only to introduce unnecessary ambiguities into a subject which is difficult enough already. Clarity of treatment of the concept as embodied in the Christian dogma can only be preserved if we adhere closely to the scholastic terminology in the two definitions of creation which they bid us accept. (i) *Creatio est productio rei secundum totam suam substantiam*. (ii) *Creatio est productio rei ex nihilo sui et subjecti*. Manuals of scholastic theology illuminate these two definitions at length.<sup>1</sup> We have only to think of the first, the production of a thing in regard of its whole substance, to see that such an act is quite

<sup>1</sup> *Vide*, e.g., Joyce's able treatment in his *Principles of Natural Theology*, ch. xiv, *passim*.

outside the range either of our experience or of our power. As Joyce says, "production, so far as our experience goes, is never production of the whole substance of a thing: in every case it supposes subject-matter. In other words, we are familiar with *change*, but not with creation." The second definition is decisive—the production of a thing from a previous non-existence alike of itself and of any subject-matter. Clearly only an infinite power, as Joyce again points out, can produce "the whole substantial reality of a thing without subject-matter of any kind: for the result in this case involves the transition from sheer nonentity to being, and the distance between these *termini* is infinite."

Now, if the strength of the argument from analogy depends upon the amount of truth in the resemblance, we must admit that by no effort of imagination nor by analogy can we form any intelligible idea of what is meant by the Christian dogma of creation. Must we go on to infer that the idea is absurd and should be abandoned? The utmost we can say is that the Church by this dogma seeks to exclude erroneous conceptions of how the universe came into being. It can give us no positive help in our efforts to rationalize the concept of creation. We are in no better case, then, with "creation" than we were with "mediation."



## CHAPTER XII

### THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

WE come finally to the mystery of the Trinity in Unity and the Unity in Trinity, and we enter upon this in the spirit of Augustine, not because we wish to discuss the subject, but lest our silence be misinterpreted.

And first let us say that the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity is a postulate arising out of the specifically religious consciousness of God in Christ Jesus. It is in its presentation the product of metaphysical speculation and theological discussion, but in its origin it is rather a truth of revealed religion. The data for it are in the nature of a discovery in religious experience, and arise out of an historically mediated Divine Self-disclosure.

Next let us note that unless there is first a full and unqualified acceptance of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, no Trinitarian problem arises to be discussed. In the "religion of Jesus the worshipper," whether as ancient Arianism or its modern equivalents, the problem has no place. It is only in the "religion which worships Jesus," the Catholic Faith, that we are confronted by data which demand the doctrine of the Trinity to account for them. If Jesus be not God the Son Incarnate, but a human person in whom God revealed Himself as in no other, then the relation of Jesus to the God who dwelt in Him is simply explicable in terms of a doctrine of Divine Immanence and leaves us no baffling problem for intellectual explication. Once, however, we agree to take the doctrine of the Incarnation seriously and to accept the Christian Creed, we are faced with a problem which ultimately baffles all human thought and leaves us intellectually at sea.

If the relation between the Incarnate Son and the Heavenly Father is to be construed in terms of ontology, if, i.e., we believe that the Son was "of one substance" with the Father as touching His Godhead, then we must go on to face the question of distinctions, eternal and real, within the Godhead itself, distinctions which, for want of a better term, we call "persons."

If, again, Pentecost was what the Church has interpreted it to be, namely, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in Christ's Body, the Church, then, in the light of Old Testament revelation of the activities of the Spirit in pre-Christian times, and in the fuller light of Christ's own teaching concerning the Person and mission of the Holy Ghost, and in the fullest light of subsequent Christian experience, we are forced to ask the question, What is the relation of the Spirit of God to God the Father and God the Son?

Given the "Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost" as amongst us and remaining with us in the Christian experience of God in Christ Jesus, we must from these data reach certain conclusions about the Being of God in His interior Nature. These conclusions are set forth by the Church in the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity.

Now, it is well for us in these days to have clearly before us a considered statement of what is involved in the Church's belief. We cannot do better than reproduce the careful formulation found in Bishop Grafton's *Digest*, which is a perfectly admirable summary of the essential points in the whole conception. Let us see what they are.

#### The Trinity of Persons.

There is in this Trinity : (i) The Father, or the Source who is neither made nor created nor begotten, but who begets ever and eternally His Son, like to Himself in all things, save in the act of begetting.

(ii) The Son, or the Word of the Father, neither made nor created, but eternally and ever being begotten of the Substance of the Father.

(iii) The Holy Spirit, or the Love of the Father and the

Son, neither made nor created nor begotten, but ever proceeding from the Father and through the Son, by way of breath or spiration.

And in this Trinity there is unity, consubstantiality, perfect equality as to essence ; distinction without division or confusion of personality.

In this concept we are not dealing with an immature and unintellectual confusion which conceivably by a more modern clarity of thought could be made luminously comprehensible to the modern mind. On the contrary, we have here the considered judgment of the finest minds on the subject and the ripe results of centuries of thought and controversy. We do well, therefore, in all humility to ponder the implications of the doctrine and seek to understand at any rate what it implies before we lightly dismiss it or acquiesce in any modification of it in the interests of what we are assured is a clearer and more intelligible "modernism" on the subject.

Now, this doctrine has its roots in the Old Testament, is implicitly contained in our Lord's own teaching, explicitly formulated in the Baptismal formula of the early Church, and has always been believed in as the fundamental mystery of Christian and Catholic Faith.

Moreover, it offers nothing in its enunciation which is contrary to reason, because the Unity is affirmed of the Nature of the Divine Essence ; the Trinity of the "personality" only. Although relating to the same object, this double affirmation does not treat of it in the same way ; and this accounts for there being no contradiction of terms.

The doctrine is nevertheless above the powers of reason, which cannot give completely to itself an account of all these relations. It cannot, therefore, be comprehended by reason, though it may be apprehended by it.

Now, to discuss the validity or otherwise of the arguments which have been urged for or against this central Christian doctrine of the Trinity would take us far afield into the history of Christian doctrine.

We may, however, seek to elucidate the conception a little

more fully here in the light of certain alien conceptions which have been held in contrast to it in the past. The most cherished inheritance of the Christian Church from Judaism was its ethical monotheism. If this were not to be imperilled, Christians had to face the dilemma—either three Gods or a reconsideration of the doctrine of the Godhead in the fuller light of Christian experience. The Church rejected Polytheism, and fought its way through the suggested compromise of Arianism to a carefully formulated Trinitarian doctrine as the only adequate safeguard of revealed truth. The issue could have been avoided and intellectual consistency maintained by a denial of the Incarnation. The Church chose rather to revise its theory of the Godhead. It must not be supposed, however, that all this was the work of a day and that there were no attempts made to avoid the mystery by theories which approximated to it, whilst not being it. A much simpler and almost naïve solution was what came to be known in technical terms as the “economic” theory of the Trinity. To avoid the charge of Tritheism, it was easy to suggest that the One God manifested Himself in three “forms” or temporary “modes” as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in relation to the world and human life. The three distinctions in this case are thus not personal distinctions within the Godhead, but distinctions in the mode of revelation. God manifests Himself in three forms at three different periods of time.

The Church definitely rejected Sabellianism, enticing and convincing as it was. Having accepted the full implications of the doctrine of the Incarnation as against Arianism, it faced the problem of the Divine Sonship of Jesus and decided that this was no temporary phenomenon, but had its roots within the unity of God Himself. There must be a distinction not in the manifestation of God as Father through Jesus as the Son *par excellence*, but such a distinction in the nature of God as would admit of a relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

It is true that in the ante-Nicene period writers are found struggling with the difficulties of the problem and using inexact

and inadequate phraseology which a later age would condemn as heretical. It is true that in the post-Nicene period an "economic" theory maintained itself, but the fairest reading of the history of the doctrine can be shown to be that which sees the Church as a whole choosing rather the harder path in an effort to steer a middle course between Tritheism and Sabellianism, Unitarianism and Polytheism. In doing this the Church committed itself to a doctrine of God which ends in mystery and is ultimately beyond the grasp of any finite mind. A Unity in Trinity and a Trinity in Unity is a conception which, when applied to God, can be apprehended, but not comprehended. It presents us with a God in whom are eternal relationships and distinctions which are not less than *personal*.

Here we reach what is undoubtedly the most contested and puzzling of all the things the Church insists upon saying about the Christian conception of God. Analogies derived from our human life help us to some extent to understand a Trinity in Unity, e.g. ourselves as one, yet tripartite, body, soul, and spirit, or our minds as one and yet psychologically conceived of as memory, understanding, will, or again, if philosophically treated, as cognition, feeling, and volition. But when all is said and done, these are *impersonal* relationships, and the distinctions between them, if not numerical or even conceptual, are never *personal*. Nor are we in much better case if we adopt ethical rather than metaphysical conceptions in our effort to grasp what is implied by personal distinctions within the Godhead. Augustine fell back upon the great thought of Love. God is Love, and as self-sufficing must have possessed from all eternity and before creation an Object of His Love, and this is to be sought therefore *within Himself*. But even if by this means we pass from the idea of an eternally solitary One to the conception of a relationship of mutuality between the Lover and the Loved One, whilst it is legitimate for thought to postulate a Third as nexus between Subject and Object (He that loves, that which is loved, and love), yet this halts at the demand of the Christian who insists that the Third also is, in some, to our minds incon-



ceivable, way, personal and personally related to the other two. It is the word "personal" that condemns all our finite efforts to penetrate into the mystery, and it haunts all our "intellectual" solutions as a ghost who will not be laid to rest. It is one thing to insist upon God as a Trinity of Power, Wisdom, and Love, as Augustine does, but it is quite another thing to describe these three as in some sense personal and personally distinct. The great African Father was not blind to these objections, and himself warns us that, after all, the argument from our own personality as three in one and one in three is inadequate, since all through we are thinking of a single "I," of which these distinctions may be predicated; we are dealing, that is to say, with *one mind*, within which these distinctions hold, but when we come to the simplicity of that Highest Nature which is God, although there is one God, there are *three* persons, and the distinctions, therefore, are to be sought not within the *one* personality or the *one* mind, but rather there is One Nature, and within it is a Tri-personality. The fact is that our human analogies, whilst they carry us some way, yet in the end break down. If we take the analogy of thinker, the thing thought, and the act of thinking, we do not get beyond the conception of One Mind within which these distinctions are conceivable.

Yet the Creed speaks of "*three persons*" in one God. True that word "person" is here used as a technical phrase with a definite connotation and a long history behind it. It certainly does not mean what we to-day would naturally think it meant, viz. that just as Peter, James, and John are three distinct and distinguishable, separate and separated, individuals, so are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This would be Tritheism pure and simple. What does the word mean, then? Is it merely equivalent to "mode" of manifestation? Is it a term to cover some mode of existence more than impersonal and less than fully individual? Some would contend for this *minimum* meaning and escape difficulties which the Church cannot avoid when it insists upon attaching more meaning than this to the word "person." The phrase covers something which is more than impersonal, and which

yet stops short of a distinct separated individuality. The concept is that of a Unity and the distinctions covered by the word "persons" are within that unity, not outside of it—yet there are not three Gods, but one God. Again, the One God is not a mere unit, but a Unity, and this Unity is conceived of as a Simplicity so rich and full as to contain a Trinity which does not stop short of being in some, to our minds inconceivable and unimaginable, sense, "personal."

Clearly, then, we must begin to revise our ideas of personality and enrich our concept of "person," if we are to argue from the human to the Divine. Can we eliminate from "human personality" such characteristics as pertain to its finitude, whilst retaining at the same time the concept as in the highest and purest sense applicable to God? Would it be safer to speak of personality *in* God rather than the personality *of* God, and in this case must we not go on to maintain that there exists beyond finite personality a higher category which we name supra-personal? <sup>1</sup>

Along this line of thought some fruitful results have, in fact, been reached, and Lotze taught us that perfect personality is in God alone. We are but pale copies of a Divine original. Hence our knowledge of ourselves as finite is not the measure by which we can hope to appraise the Divine Nature. Nevertheless it is a guide. Limitation, dependence, circumscription, these "notes" of our finitude can conceivably be thought away, and we can then rise to a conception of personality in which the element of exclusiveness and finite individuality yields to a richer concept of Being in which the notes of Fellowship and mutual all-inclusiveness predominate. So we reach a conception found in the final formulation of Greek Patristic theology, the doctrine of co-inherence (*περιχώρησις*), a doctrine founded upon Biblical data—the Son is in the bosom of the Father and the Spirit is in God.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the Christian doctrine of the Trinity has constituted a perpetual challenge to thought, and it still forces men to explore more fully the meaning of our own finite individuality.

<sup>1</sup> Vide C. C. J. Webb, *God and Personality*, lect. iii, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Vide Ottley, *Doctrine of the Incarnation*, p. 573.

The modern world owes its richer conception of personality to this challenge. We to-day are moving in the direction of a fuller appreciation of the concept of "fellowship" in our psychological analysis of human life. We are coming to see that in the past a mistake has been made in laying the emphasis upon "exclusiveness" as the last word in our thought of a "person." This is indirectly the result of the challenge presented by the Church to thinkers in its presentation of God's Nature as in some sense a "Fellowship," a "Society," or whatever term is chosen in modern phraseology to do justice to that "otherness" in the perfect personality which is covered by the mutual coinherence of the Three in One and the One in Three.

It was Canon Wilfrid Richmond<sup>1</sup> who taught our generation the great truth that personality is the capacity for fellowship. Bradley and a whole school of modern philosophers have insisted again and again upon "limitation" as the essential note of human personality. This, however, is now seen to be only one aspect, and that the least essential if we are using the concept with a view to transcending it in our endeavour to reach a fuller and a richer meaning. "For me," said Bradley, "a person is finite or is meaningless." If, however, man be a finite-infinite being, then, in the process of a higher becoming, the infinite within him is that urge towards fellowship which finds its consummation in a Pauline experience where the barrier of exclusiveness has been in some mystical sense overcome so that, with the great Apostle, Christians can say, "I live; yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me."

Personality in the individual is, as Wilfrid Richmond taught us, the capacity for society, fellowship, communion. The very sense of limitation and isolation which we feel as persons is itself a hint of the possibility of a higher life in which these notes are transcended. Man reaches out to a larger Beyond, and must lose his soul to find it at a deeper level in Another. In doing so he witnesses to a higher ideal and level of life, a fellowship of persons, a community within the unity of the self, which would make it all-sufficing and

<sup>1</sup> *An Essay on Personality as a Philosophical Principle.*

inclusively self-contained. If this line of thought does not take us beyond the category of "mutuality" which we find intelligible as between *two* persons made one in love, at least it is an advance beyond a barren isolation, and it points us towards a still higher life of which the Christian doctrine of the Procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son is a hint and the doctrine of the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost a finger-post indicating the mystery of the Trinity.

In any case, the last word about ourselves is not our finite individuality viewed in its isolation and separateness, but the fact that we must go outside of ourselves if we are in any real sense to achieve personality. Is not this note in human life of "incompleteness" a clear sign that we have not exhausted the meaning of the Christian contention that we are made in the image of God, and that it doth not yet appear what we shall be? If we are indeed here and now pale copies of a Divine Original, then in God will be found perfectly that which we dimly feel we lack. Here, surely, the Christian doctrine of God as the perfect Fellowship, the Three in One and One in Three, meets our intellectual quest with a challenge and our spiritual need with its adequate satisfaction.

In this case the Athanasian Creed is truest to life in that it challenges our intellect whilst bidding us satisfy our spiritual hunger, not in understanding, but in worship. For the Catholic Faith is this, that we worship One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, and, as Niceta of Remesiana reminds us, to this Faith we must hold fast and be true to our profession in the Mysteries, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts."

Admitting, then, that the Christian dogma of the Trinity in Unity and the Unity in Trinity eludes full intellectual analysis and thus ends in mystery, we can still offer it as a postulate of a Christian Philosophy. We can further offer it as such in an attempt to show how it affords a valuable light upon the problem of that Ultimate Unity after which philosophical thought is groping in the attempt to solve its problem of the One and the Many.

We should follow the line of argument offered, for example, in Dr. C. F. d'Arcy's book on *Idealism and Theology*. He has a chapter on the Ultimate Unity in which he shows that the presuppositions on which philosophy is driven back are identical with those which underlie Christian theology.<sup>1</sup> Dr. d'Arcy maintains that "the multiplicity of the Divine Nature is personal, the unity is superpersonal,"<sup>2</sup> and he contends for the position that the final superpersonal unity is the most intimate of all unities, the concrete universal.<sup>3</sup> For Christian thought, "God is in His ultimate nature superpersonal; that is, He is personal, and more than personal. He is superrational; that is, He is rational, and more than rational. And at the same time the human self is not to be denied personality, rationality, reality, concreteness, using these terms with the meaning which properly belongs to them. This (he says) is a doctrine of Monotheism of the strictest kind. It attributes to God not a mere numerical unity, nor yet the abstract unity of an all-pervading principle. For it, God is not one person among many, nor is He a mere Life or Soul of the universe. In contrast with all Henotheistic and Pantheistic ideas, He is the concrete Universal One, who, though all-inclusive, yet secures to each finite person the full possession of individuality."<sup>4</sup>

The failure of human thought to rise to the absolute point of view and to see all in one forces us, as Dr. d'Arcy shows, both in philosophy and theology to take refuge in mysticism, but this surely is in accordance with the best thought on the subject of the Being and Character of God. We have seen that our whole finite knowledge of God is ultimately dependent upon His self-revelation. What He is in Himself we cannot fathom. No man hath seen God at any time. Christian thought does justice to this when it contends for His Transcendence as well as His Immanence. Christian theology finds room for the truth to which Absolutist systems strive to do justice, namely, the all-inclusiveness of the whole. The

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 232, 234.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 205.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 234-5.



Christian formula is that God is all in all. That He is the ground of all finite being, and is not in any sense to be identified with the created universe as a part of it or the whole containing it, is a truth quite compatible with the thought of Him as the Absolute One. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity conserves at once His Transcendence, His complete Self-sufficiency, and also His Personal Nature. The category of Personality, when applied to Him, as we have seen, does not exhaust His Being. What we can affirm is that in relation to the world and human life He has revealed Himself as personal, and the central truth of the Incarnation is found in the revelation of the essence of God as Holy Love. But when we have done fullest justice to the revealed truth of the Being and Character of God in relation to the world and human life, there still remains the fact that there are heights and depths in the Divine which must ever transcend our finite powers of comprehension. Justice is done to this truth in the contention that God is superpersonal. Christian experience confirms this in what Dr. Otto has emphasized as the feeling of the "wholly other," and it results in the attempts made by Christian mystics and Neo-platonists to define the indefinable in negative terms. Ultimately "no name names Him." Hence the reluctance in some quarters to ascribe personality to God, and the charge of anthropomorphism so frequently brought against the Christian conception of God. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity in Unity does justice to the truth in both conceptions. The multiplicity of the Divine Nature is personal. Hence the justice of the contention that God is personal. We may say if we like that there is personality in God rather than speak of the personality of God. At the same time, the unity is superpersonal. Here we do justice to the "wholly other" in the absolute Numen. Our negative terminology is legitimate if we remember that by it we are seeking to ascribe to Deity immeasurable plenitude of being. Dr. Otto has shown that whilst the Numen in this sense utterly transcends definition, yet It has not left Itself without a witness in human experience.

"It is often thought that the designations of deity in impersonal, neuter terms ('It'), rather than in terms of person and masculine pronoun ('He,' 'Thou'), are too poor and too pale to gain a place in our Christian thought of God. But this is not always correct. Frequently such terms indicate the mysterious overplus of the non-rational and numinous, that cannot enter our 'concepts' because it is too great and too alien to them; and in this sense they are quite indispensable, even in hymns and prayers. It is a defect in our devotional poetry that it hardly knows any other image for the eternal mystery of the Godhead than those drawn from social intercourse and personal relationship, and so it tends to lose sight of just the mysterious transcendent aspect of deity. Assuredly God is for us 'Thou' and a Person. But this personal character is that side of His nature which is turned manward—it is like a 'Cape of Good Hope,' jutting out from a mountain range which, as it recedes, is lost to view in the '*tenebræ æternæ*,' only to be expressed by the suspension of speech and the inspiration of sacred song."<sup>1</sup>

It would not be difficult to find Biblical justification for this pregnant thought of God as in His multiplicity personal but in His unity superpersonal; revealed in the Incarnation in terms of personal life, yet in Himself ultimately not exhausted by the concept of personality, but the Absolute One "dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see."<sup>2</sup> An example readily occurs to our mind in the Seer's vision "in the Spirit," when, gazing through a door into Heaven, he sees a throne and One sitting upon the throne.<sup>3</sup> It is characteristic that no attempt is made to name the unnameable. The Seer falls back upon earthly imagery in his description. Where human thought falters, symbolism is introduced to describe the One whom no name names. In this case resort is made to gem-like colours, precious stones, a vision of emerald, and in this way anthropomorphic details are avoided. Out of the throne proceed lightnings, thunders, familiar symbols of the Divine glory and power. The lightning especially is a "numinous" object, and still

<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 208.    <sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 16,    <sup>3</sup> Rev. iv. 1-5.

inspires in some people the sense of awe, terror, and fear, the "numenous" feeling aroused in the presence of the uncanny and the supernatural. But besides this there proceed forth from the same throne "voices." Here we have the personal note introduced in the midst of a symbolism designed to indicate to us the "wholly other" in the description of the High and Lofty One. The still small voice is a reminder that the Heart of the Eternal is wondrously kind. The Trinity in Unity is in essence Holy Love. The truth of it is witnessed in a Cape of Good Hope manwards in the Incarnation :

So the All-Great were the All-Loving too—  
So through the thunder comes a human voice  
Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here ! "

We thus avoid a crude anthropomorphism, whilst at the same time doing justice to the truth of the Biblical teaching that since God made man in His Image there must be in God something corresponding to the highest we know in human life, and therefore something which is not below the level of the personal even though it infinitely transcends human personality at its highest.

Our consideration of the doctrine of the Trinity has at least, we venture to hope, convinced us of its value for theology, if not for philosophy, and we may hesitate long before we abandon it in the interests of a narrower rationalism. How rich the content of the doctrine is may be appreciated, perhaps, more vividly from the consideration of a passage like the following from Mr. W. R. Thomson's book on *The Christian Idea of God*, which we may quote :

"In the doctrine of the Trinity [writes Mr. Thomson] we have what might be called the instinctive reaction of an historical, redemptive religion against Deism and Pantheism. It is true, as Harnack says, that the doctrine is a "most peculiar blend" of Christian thought and ancient philosophy. Such a blend was inevitable. Yet the doctrine was an effort to conserve certain great interests in the conception of God—the Divine Transcendence, the reality of God's revelation on the plane of history, and, no less, the reality of His action in the life of the individual. The three "moments" of

Absoluteness, Personality, and Love are expressed in the doctrine. That God is the living God, that He was present in Christ in the love that blessed and redeemed the world, and that He imparts Himself to men by the Spirit—these are simple and sublime convictions that the doctrine enshrines. We see Christian thought freeing itself from the coils of the emanation idea, and laying firm hold of the idea of revelation or self-manifestation. We have an impressive assertion of the personality of God over against doctrines of the divine that made any sort of predication meaningless. The doctrine of the Trinity was recognized as a mystery. But it must not be forgotten that the mystery was not that of being or essence or substance or existence, but the mystery of Personality—not the mystery of the formless and the void, but of life itself. Theology and religion may well be content to stand before that, as before the unfathomable fact.”<sup>1</sup>

We reach, then, this position: (i) that Christian thought cannot express itself within the limits of a purely immanentist system; (ii) that it demands the correlative concepts of transcendence and immanence; (iii) that its doctrine of the Incarnation necessitates this, since it cannot regard the Incarnation as the climax of the Divine Immanence, but claims a transcendental element in the God-Man, justice to which can only be done by an acceptance of the Nicene formula and the unity of essence between God the Father and God the Son. (iv) The further experience which finds expression in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the Third “Person” of the Blessed Trinity, results in a doctrine of the Trinity in Unity and the Unity in Trinity which represents the effort of Christian thinkers to avoid the extremes of a barren Monotheism and a crude Tritheism. (v) The doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the Incarnation together conserve the values suggested by the correlative concepts of the Divine Transcendence and the Divine Immanence. (vi) The doctrine of the God-Man, the Mediator, is the Church’s contribution to the vexed problem of the relation between the One and the Many. This doctrine of Mediation as elaborated and enriched

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 133-4.

by Christian thinkers in the light of what they believed to be historical fact, viz. the life and work of Jesus Christ and the subsequent history of Christian experience summed up in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, enables us to give some kind of coherent account of the relation between God and the finite Creation. Christian religious experience witnesses to the fact that the Transcendent Sovereign God is known to them in Christ Jesus. The Pauline experience, which is but a typical example of the experience of countless other Christians, bears witness to an intimacy of communion with God in Christ which is a new phenomenon in the history of the soul's quest after union with the Divine. The experience which Christ Himself in the days of His Flesh had of God His Father, He reproduces in measure in those who are incorporated into Him by Baptism and are awakened to a new sense of Divine sonship through the Holy Spirit. Thus the gulf separating God from the sons of men, the Creator from His creatures, is effectively bridged by the God-Man, the Mediator, and in Him, in His Body, the Church, the sons of God are reconciled and hold communion with God. Professor C. C. J. Webb has shown how in this doctrine of the Mediator are combined—as descriptions of the origin of our spirits from God—the two ideas of creation and generation which express man's distinction from God and man's affinity to God. Thus “*identity* of nature with God, and therefore the metaphor of *sonship* which aims at suggesting this,” he says, “is appropriated to the mediator; the *difference* of nature and the corresponding metaphor of *creatureship* to the individual human spirit. The relation of the Mediator to the individual human spirit may be said to be that of archetype.”<sup>1</sup> In this connexion he examines the Pauline metaphor of the “Body” of Christ, not of God, of which the Christians are the “members.” The thought of St. Paul, he says—

“seems to be that though the larger and inclusive life in which that of any individual man or woman must find its completion is the life of God (and for St. Paul there can certainly be no

<sup>1</sup> *God and Personality*, p. 164.



more than one God), yet it can only find this completion in the Divine life when that life is poured out, so to say, into a person, who, while thus sharing the Divine nature, is yet distinguishable from God. The distinction from God which Religion implies remains to the end; but the difference of the created nature from the Divine is transcended through the intimate union (symbolized by that of the members of a body with its head) with a Spirit essentially one with God, though distinguishable from Him, the archetype of the created spirits, who obtain in their union with this Spirit what is described as a sonship, not, like that Spirit's own, by nature, but by adoption" (Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 5).<sup>1</sup>

Thus Professor Webb finds that the notion of a mediator, especially in the form it assumes in Christian theology, throws a valuable light upon the vexed problem of creation. (vii) The consideration of this problem of creation as it presents itself to us in the form of the Christian dogma of creation *ex nihilo* finds us totally incapable of conceiving how God created the universe. (viii) Whilst thus Christian religious experience enables the Christian thinker to assert boldly that the Transcendent God is mediated to the sons of men in Christ Jesus and through the Holy Spirit of Promise, the question as to the validity of this concept of transcendence before the bar of reason is still an outstanding difficulty in the effort to produce a Christian philosophy. Help, however, may be sought in the appeal to the evidences of the Transcendent as immanently apprehended. The "sense" of transcendence in things finite—the revelation of the Supernatural in and through the Natural—and in this connexion supremely the appeal to the significance of values—along these lines, an effort may be made to justify so far as possible the Christian belief in a Transcendent God immanent in the world and in human life. The argument from values would include, of course, the moral argument as this has been elaborated in the hands of Christian theologians more particularly since Kant. (ix) Finally, appeal is made to the Catholic conception

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 166; cf. p. 181.

of the Incarnation ; and on the assumption of the substantial historicity of the Gospel narratives, the Christian thinker would point to the life and work of Jesus Christ and the subsequent history of the Christian religious experience as confirmation of the presence in the finite created world and in the lives of men of a Supernatural Life, the presence of which cannot be accounted for purely as a product of earth, but which bears upon It and reveals in Itself the marks of the Supernatural and Transcendent. Our refusal to accept the Incarnation as the climax of the Divine Immanence and our contention that it was nothing less than the advent into our mundane world of God the Son Himself in His own Person revealed within the limits of His Manhood means, as we have seen, that ultimately the Person of Christ cannot be rationalized nor can our finite minds ever fully comprehend all that He was and is. Hence we cannot fit Him in to any philosophical system, and the effort to clear up the relations between philosophy and religion breaks down at this point.

This being so, a further question arises. Is it possible to transcend the limits of rationality in our effort to apprehend Him ? Is there an activity of the whole personality which we should call " faith " by which we can go a step further than an intellectual activity can take us in the effort to know Him ? And further, if so, is there any philosophical method by which such an activity as we experience in what the Christian calls " faith " can be justified ? In the following chapter we will endeavour to answer these questions.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CHRIST AND METAPHYSICS

THE Gospel portrait of Jesus of Nazareth, in its consistency, naturalness, and absence of incongruities, impresses us as a rescript from life, a first-hand impression, ultimately derived from eye-witnesses, of One whom they had seen, talked with, and observed—a real Person, not a literary creation or the product of poetic imagination. Had the writers set out to describe from their own imagination a Person combining in Himself Divine and human attributes ; had they wished to give their own version of the life of the God-Man, apart from any available knowledge or evidence of any such life having been lived in actual fact, how different the result would have been ! The biography of Jesus was never constructed by tabulating Divine and human characteristics and then seeking to combine them together into an impossible amalgam—the result would have been a monstrosity. There is no trace of any such thing in the Gospels. From first to last the Person of Christ is a unity, and never once does the problem of the Two Natures obtrude itself upon our notice by any seeming incongruity in the narratives themselves. The Gospel portrait derives from an æsthetic activity which gives a first-hand impression of the Reality as a whole.

But now apply the logical criterion of judgment to the elucidation of the same Reality. Approach it, i.e., from the intellectual standpoint. Instead of knowing the Life of Jesus by sympathetic acquaintance and intimate personal contact, try to know about it by intellectual analysis. What a contrast ! Instead of the simplicity of life, we have the complexity of incompatibilities and antinomies.

What a change when we pass from Gospel language to the Athanasian Creed or the Chalcedonian Definition !

“ The child grew and waxed strong ; increased in wisdom and

stature." All this we can grasp. A normal human growth—advance in knowledge through experience—what more natural!

Yet the intellect must go on to criticize this experience; to analyse it and to tabulate the Life so lived in a series of propositions; to translate history into Creed.

And the Church was forced to do it in self-defence, because men could not be content to leave the intellectual problem unsolved. Hence the Nicene and Chalcedonian terminology as a clear intellectual analysis of the Problem of the Two-Natured Christ:

"One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-Begotten, to be acknowledged of two natures; without confusion, without conversion, without division, never to be separated; the distinction of natures being in no wise done away because of the union, but rather the characteristic property of each nature being preserved, and concurring into one Person and one subsistence, not as if Christ were parted or divided into two Persons, but one and the same Son and Only-Begotten God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ."

Thus does the Church express in metaphysical terminology the truth hidden in the simplicity of the Gospel language.

Being Very Man of the substance of the Virgin Mary, His Mother, He must needs grow in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man. Being Very God of Very God, Begotten not made, how can He pray for a Divine Grace of which He Himself is the Fountain Source, or plead in an agony for the execution of a Divine Will not His own and yet His very possession? If we say that He functions in two Natures, and that we must attribute the human feelings, tears, sorrow, and finitude to the one source, and the glory, the miraculous power, the profound spiritual insight, to the other source, then how can we conceive of a unity of Person in One who possesses two Natures, two Wills, two Souls? Is not this the very quintessence of abnormality?

Given the Church's belief in His true Deity; given the Incarnation; given the fact that these Gospel narratives reveal to us God leading a truly human life; given the God-Man as the true key to the interpretation of the Gospel story—

then how can One who is All-Wise grow in wisdom, One who is Omniscient advance in knowledge, One whose dwelling is the supra-mundane and whose Being is transcendental move about on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, feel hungry and go to sleep in a boat, live, in short, the restricted life of our terrestrial existence and taste of its finitude and necessary limitations? So does the intellect, grappling with the problem, raise for itself a host of insuperable difficulties, and create a dense fog of its own making to obscure the Gospel Figure from the eyes of simple faith. And the Church, in self-defence, is forced to draw up Creeds and Conciliar Definitions to safeguard the truth in the terminology of the speculative schools in reply to the hard questions the intellectuals insist upon propounding.

The Church is blamed for expressing its belief in terms of metaphysics. Yet it must needs do so, since its claim for Christ is that He is the clue to the nature of ultimate Reality. This is a claim in the sphere of philosophy. From the intellectual standpoint the Christological problem is a metaphysical problem. The attempt to express it purely in terms of ethical and spiritual categories is doomed thus to failure. The Church's belief in the true Deity and perfect Humanity of its Master means a claim that the Ultimate Reality for the Christian cannot be expressed in concepts which are less than truly personal, and that the key to the whole problem of the relation between the Divine and Human is to be found in the Person of Christ; nay, that the final end and meaning of the whole evolutionary process and the true interpretation of all human life is to be stated in terms of Him who was, and is, and is to come. Christ for the Christian is of *cosmic* significance, and this claim means the invasion by Christianity of the realm of philosophy and a claim to a voice in the philosophical disputes as to the nature of the ultimate Reality.

Does the Church offer any solution of the Christological problem? It is content in its dogmatic formularies to state the problem, tabulate the essential data and warn men, as the result of centuries of intellectual speculation and effort, that there are certain solutions which are defective, and must be



avoided—solutions which have reached a logical consistency at the expense of truth—which have satisfied reason only by a failure to do justice to one or other factor in the problem. Within the limits thus laid down of what to avoid, the Church leaves men free to pursue the intellectual quest and to solve the problem if they can.

Ultimately, however, it will be found that the problem is insoluble.

To-day modern Churchmen tell us that the great advances in human knowledge since the days of the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) enable us to approach the problem of Christ's Person with better hopes of success. Hence the fresh effort to restate the question in terms of modern thought, and the demand, not for the abolition of all creeds, but the substitution of new ones for the old. Now, whilst fresh investigation and discussion may help many to grasp more fully the essential difficulties of the problem, it is well for us to recognize that no intellectual solution will solve it.

The plain fact is (as I said many years ago)<sup>1</sup> that the Person of Christ is the bankruptcy of human logic, and that it is better for us to acquiesce in this rather than to seek for intellectual consistency at the expense of ignoring or explaining away essential data in the problem. True, we can gain intellectual consistency by calling the Divine Human or the Human Divine; we can, if we like, seek to obliterate the distinction between Creator and Creature; we can rule out the supernatural or miraculous. We can, again, eliminate from our Christianity all that leaves room for wonder and that in our belief which confronts human reason with a flaming sword. In this way we can present a religion eminently adapted to supply the needs of the rationalists, BUT it will not be Christianity.

Ultimately we are driven back to Tertullian's famous dictum, and must believe, because of the very *absurdity* of our faith, if judged by the human criterion of the logical faculty. Moreover, we can never have *infallible* certitude. The assaults of reason must ever be with us, attacking and criticizing our

<sup>1</sup> *A Study in Christology*, written in 1915, published in 1917.

belief. Had we infallible certitude there would be no room left for faith's activity. There is no way of proving rationally the Deity of Christ. On the contrary, there are many lines of thought which suggest the incredibility and impossibility of His ever having appeared as the God-Man. The Church, however, bids us see that whilst His Person cannot be confined within the limits of rationality, yet *beyond these limits* lies the irrational or the supra-rational ; and since the supreme triumph of reason is to cast doubt upon its own validity (as a great Spanish writer has been trying to teach us in *The Tragic Sense of Life*), we are left to seek to gain a nearer approach to the truth than is open to us by mere intellectual contemplation of the mystery as it were *ab extra*.

Is there any other way of approach ?

The suggestion we make is that the æsthetic activity which, according to the Italian philosopher Croce, is prior to the logical, gives us the Gospel portrait, and the intellectual abstraction which comes later is revealed in the Athanasian Creed and the Nicene and Chalcedonian terminology. The one is a rescript from life ; the other the product of intellectual analysis.

Which gives us a deeper insight into Reality ? Which is nearer to the truth ? The question is answered for some of us by considering our own approach to the Christ. Do we find Him by intellectual activity, pondering over the historical records and analysing the implications involved in the concept of the Two Natures ? Can any such process of abstraction and formularization ever bring us within measurable distance of the Gospel Figure ? On the other hand, we know that, through experience in prayer, communion, and self-sacrificing devotion to His ideals, we do find God in Christ Jesus. His Presence is a felt reality in the Christian life. Striving to live at the level of His ideals, following in His steps, we taste of Eternal Life in time and space, and so live His Life—we in Him, and He in us. Thus, by an activity of the whole personality at its deepest levels, we discover Him in whom we live and move and have our being. Through life then, rather than through intellectual processes, we get a deeper knowledge of the truth. Not that the intellect has not its part to play,

but that it has not the last nor the only word to say in the quest after Reality. Not by process of logical reasoning, but by dutiful practise of the Presence of God, do we attain to an intuitive apprehension of the Living One. Thus we gain a fuller knowledge of His Reality in the intenser activity of a lived experience than was open to us in the comparatively barren zone of abstract thought.

And this is justified in our own day by the growing appreciation of the limitations of the intellectual approach to Reality. Bergson's attack upon the intellect and his exaltation of direct intuition as a surer way to the discovery of the Real is significant in this connexion, as also the emphasis upon the "reign of relativity" in every department of human knowledge. If we realize that by intellectual abstraction we are confining ourselves in a "strait-jacket of static and spatio moulds," we shall the more readily grasp the fact that our "Dogmas" and Credal Forms have, after all, given us simply "frozen thought," and that what we are really searching for is His Life, His Personality in its living content, not our elaborated logical propositions concerning Him.

"Metaphysics," says Mr. Bradley, "is the finding of bad reasons for what we believe upon instinct, but to find these reasons is no less an instinct." And Lord Haldane, in quoting this sentence, reminds us that Bradley is really warning us against pedantry, the undue exaltation of the abstract mind. "His warning," says Lord Haldane, "is one which those who are disposed to regard lightly the faith of simple minds would do well to bear in remembrance. For that faith is, in itself, a correction of abstractions. It is the sense of the fuller significance of experience."<sup>1</sup>

We have in many striking ways a parallel to the Christological problem in the efforts made to solve the difficulty of the relation between soul and body, mind and brain.

Living our everyday life we know soul and body, mind and brain in indissoluble union. But let intellect approach the problem, and at once we are confronted by endless perplexities. If we start with an analysis of either factor we

<sup>1</sup> *Reign of Relativity*, p. 417.

are left wondering how two such diverse entities can ever come together. Dr. Wildon Carr has dwelt upon the antithesis which arises from such a process of mental abstraction and logical analysis. "The constituent elements of the mind and the constituent elements of the body," he tells us, "are absolutely heterogeneous, and there is no common factor in psychical and physiological process." Physiologists and psychologists have elaborated these differences, and have sought a solution of the problem either in terms of pure materialistic mechanism or in terms of pure idealistic subjectivism. Destroy the brain and the mind goes too. Consciousness is an epiphenomenon of cerebral activity, an accompaniment of the physical and chemical changes which occur in the brain. So the Materialist argues that consciousness is a by-product of physiological processes. On the other hand, the Idealist would contend that all our knowledge of physiological processes is perceptive and that cerebral activity has no meaning apart from a perceiving subject. Hence the theory of Psycho-Physical Parallelism, and the possibility of its interpretation in terms either of materialistic "psychology without a soul" or in terms of an idealistic philosophy which sees the physiological accompaniment of consciousness as simply the reality of consciousness itself as this is perceived by another mind. Again, there is the theory of interaction with its perplexing dualism of mind and matter and the grave philosophical problem of any real relation existing between what is pure immateriality and what is pure extension. Dr. Wildon Carr would point us to Bergson's more subtle psychological treatment of the problem in *Matter and Memory*. This means a clean sweep of all theories which arise from the intellectualist approach to the problem and an effort to know the reality at the deeper level of intuitive apprehension. At this level we do not start with two diverse abstractions, a mind without a body or a body without a mind. On the contrary, it is pointed out that "mind and body are not an original diversity." This being so, the separation of the two is due to an intellectual activity which, for purposes of analysis and for the convenience of scientific investigation, abstracts

subject from object, perceiver from perceived, and so leaves us with the two in an isolation never found in the reality itself. The intellect is thus responsible for "the dichotomizing of an original unity" of which real life knows nothing. Quite simply, we can see how true this is, if we reflect upon our own experience. Living our life gives us a knowledge of mind and brain, body and soul, in indissoluble union. We have no intuitive knowledge of either in separation. Intuition in this problem is nearer to the reality which living experience enables us to grasp in a way no logical analysis of the problem could do.

So in Christology. The problem how the human and the Divine—seemingly so diverse—could possibly be united and function as indissolubly one baffles the intellect. Read the Gospels, however, as a description from life of how it was actually done in the earthly career of Jesus Christ, and the picture is simplicity itself, much the same, in fact, as any description of our own life as we live it would baffle the mind of a thinker who was puzzled over the problem of the possibility of the union of immateriality with material substance, and convinced on intellectual grounds of its incredibility. Yet the simplest peasant could inform him, not why it could be done or how, but that actually it is done. We know from actual experience that mind and body do exist in a wonderful harmony in life, in spite of all the objections against its possibility from the physiological or psychological standpoint. So experience taught the followers of Jesus that a Divine-Human Life could be lived, and be seen to be, not a monstrosity, but to all appearance a perfectly natural phenomenon. If intellect creates difficulties of its own making in physiology and psychology, we must not be surprised if it seeks to dichotomize an original unity in the Person of Christ and presents us with an apparently unbridgeable gulf between the "Jesus of the Gospels" and the Christ of the Creeds, the Human and the Divine as two irreconcilable incompatibilities—the one within our experience as terrestrial, the other beyond our apprehension as transcendental. Intellect may well halt in perplexity before the problems it thus raises and seek logical consistency as Idealism and Materialism, in the



denial of one or other factor in the problem. Mutilate the Human and we get Apollinarianism: dichotomize the two and we get Nestorianism with its impossible dualism; absorb the one into the other and we reach Monophysitism. All these heresies are the result of intellectual efforts at consistency in the elucidation of a mystery which refuses to yield its secret to the wise and understanding, but which is known as a living reality to the foolish and revealed to babes in Christ and Galilean peasants in communion and fellowship with their Risen Lord.

The parallel we have sought to draw is at least significant in the insight it affords us into the difficulties created by the intellectual approach to Reality and the comparative ease with which intuition apprehends quite simply the "mysteries" which the logical faculty brings to the surface and spatializes for our contemplation. Consider in this connexion, further, another suggestive line of thought in the difference between structure and function. What could be more simple than the functioning of the human eye! Yet what, on the other hand, could be more marvellously complex than an analysis of its structure! Pages of a text-book go to the elucidation of its intricacies and the delicacy of its mechanism. Yet when it functions, how simple is it in operation! Wherein lies the difference? Our knowledge of its structure is derived from an intellectual analysis of its component parts—it is the result of scientific investigation. Whereas our knowledge of its function is a direct intuitive apprehension of a living whole. A description of the mechanism in terms of physiology will never give us the key to knowledge of what it really is. We learn this by *seeing*. Life, as an activity, in other words, is the key to the reality we are seeking.

And Biology is gradually coming to realize this. The mechanistic interpretation of life is now being realized as a palpable absurdity. We are now being told that philosophy is putting a question mark against the validity of the scientific inductive method as the sole guide to a true solution of the nature of Reality. Life is a greater Reality than our short-sighted interpretations of it. We are coming at long last to

realize that "the phenomena of life are of such a nature that no physical or chemical explanation of them is remotely conceivable."<sup>1</sup>

"Life (so we are told) manifests itself in two ways—as structure and as activity. But we also recognize—a biologist feels it in his very bones—that this is *living* structure and *living* activity. . . . But the more closely living activity in general is examined, the more clear does it become that all living activity is structural or metabolic activity, either directly or indirectly."<sup>2</sup>

If, then, the structure itself is to be conceived of as active—as alive, then, in biological investigation of living organisms we are dealing, as Dr. Haldane has shown, with a conception radically different from any physical concept. And if this be so, then "sooner or later . . . it will be realized that the materialism of the nineteenth century has been nothing but an insignificant eddy in the stream of human progress."

But how shall we have learned thus to emancipate ourselves from the trammels of materialism? It will have been due to our growing apprehension of the essential limitations of the intellectual approach to the study of Reality. It will have been by a more direct apprehension of that Reality in its manifestation in life that we shall have gained a deeper intuitive grasp of what it really is.

Now, just as the living organism is or should be the fundamental conception of Biology, so the Living Christ, and not dead mental and intellectual abstract concepts of His Person, is or should be the fundamental conception of Christology. Christian experience must give us the truth concerning Him. Our method of approach must not be by analytical mental gymnastics "confounding the Natures" or "dividing the Persons," but by living the Life.

If we strive to live His Life in the world, reaching up to the ethical and spiritual level He has revealed to us as of the very essence of Eternal Life in time and space—we shall at that level find Him in a lived experience of personal union and communion. Living true to the deepest in us we shall

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Haldane, *Mechanism, Life, and Personality*, p. 64.    <sup>2</sup> pp. 77-8.

touch Him in whom we live and move and have our being. In life and not by intellect only do we make the great discovery. Where intellect bids us halt, faith makes its leap, and thus by a living activity of the whole human personality Godwards do we take hold of Reality Himself, and discovering thus the Divine in Human Life, living in Him and He in us, all questions concerning the possibility of a union between the Divine and Human are answered—not theoretically, but practically. And Faith can claim a closer knowledge of the Truth than was ever possible by means of speculative conjecture and the conclusions of logic.

The rest may reason and welcome,  
'Tis we musicians *know*.

Need we be surprised, then, if we discover that the portrait of Jesus Christ in the Gospels given to us by those who knew Him in the days of His flesh differs profoundly from the whole series of mental abstractions which have appeared since in numerous "Lives of Christ," issued from the study-rooms of learned professors? The attempt has been made to confine His Figure and Personality within the limits of intellectual categories, but without success. We have had the Humanitarian Christ, the "Jesus of the Gospels"; the Ethical Teacher; the ideal Labour Leader; the Æsthetic Jesus; the religious enthusiast; the eschatological Wonder-worker—all these pictures are but mental abstractions. The "Jesus of the Gospels," so dear to the heart of modern Liberalism, never existed—it is a fiction resulting from a one-sided and narrow view of the Reality, its consistency is only secured by the elimination of one whole side of His personality and the attempt to express Him within the limitations of the finite human. Schweitzer's exposure of the bankruptcy of modern Liberalism in its attempts to re-write the life of Jesus ought to have warned him that his own effort to state the problem purely in terms of "other-worldliness" and eschatological categories must equally fatally suffer from the infection of relativity. All these attempts at reproduction of the Divine Reality in photographic form from different angles do but emphasize the point we wish to make, viz. that the Reality

Himself is too big to be confined within the limitations of our logical categories of thought and our spatialized imagery cannot hold Him. He walks out of our picture-frames in which we seek to confine Him, and we must find another way of approach if we are to apprehend something of His immensity and transcendence. Like Life itself, defying the mechanistic biologists and demanding an explanation in terms not less real than itself, so does the Living Christ demand of us that we know Him not primarily or exclusively by intellectual speculation, but by and in and through a living activity of our deepest life—a sympathetic contact and intimate personal touch—the activity of a living faith in a living relationship to a Living Person—this is the way to knowledge—this the approach to a deeper and more intimate apprehension of Him. It is only in that intimacy of communion, when His Spirit touches ours in living union, that the human can awaken to a true consciousness of itself; it is when His Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the Sons of God, then it is that we have the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father!”

The case of St. Thomas is in point. Left to intellectual contemplation, the crude reality of the Cross, the gross realism of the nails were too much for faith. But a living personal contact with the Risen Lord evoked faith into activity once again, and the Apostle, held back by intellectual hesitation and logical incredulity, swept all aside in one supreme intuitive affirmation: “My Lord and my God!”

So it must be with us. The intellectual quest is not the pursuit of the many, and its fascination must not blind us to the fact that when all is said and done our intellectual knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth and our deep insight into the perplexing problem of His Person give us probably less real apprehension of Him than is open to the simplest Christian who smiles at our Trinitarian profundities and says quite simply, “By faith, I know that my Redeemer liveth.”

Whoso has felt the Spirit of the Highest  
 Cannot confound nor doubt Him nor deny.  
 Yea, with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,  
 Stand thou on that side, for on this am I,

## CHAPTER XIV

### CONCLUSION

WE must now endeavour to draw together in summary outline the implications involved in the preceding chapters.

We have contended strongly for the true meaning of finite individuality and its destiny as conceived in the light of Christianity. We have striven to steer a middle course between Absolutism and Pluralism. The claim for reality in measure for finite individuality has led us to reject all those theories of the Absolute which seek an explanation of the finite real as adjectival to the One Substance or the Absolute Self-Consciousness. We have rested upon Rashdall's position that existence for self is the *sine qua non* of any possibility of existence for others. We agree with him that the essence of a person does not consist in what can be known about him, but in his own knowledge, his own experience of himself. And we base our conclusion upon a sound psychology which refuses to see in cognition alone the reality of the self. Hegel's dictum that the rational is the real must yield place to a wider interpretation of Being. We reject the assumption that knowledge, without feeling and will, is the whole of Reality. On the contrary, our doctrine of creation enables us to view the finite-infinite self as possessing from God a measure of self-existence and freedom which consists in something more than being the thought of another or the object of another's cognition. We avoid the extremes on the one hand of regarding the finite as purely adjectival to the Whole, and on the other hand of being unrelated in an impenetrable and exclusive existence in its own absolute right. Our reality is not that of God Himself, the Absolute



One, but it is an independence derived from and conferred upon us by Him for a purpose. We possess being in order to become persons, and the condition of our growth and development into truly real personalities is to be sought in the relationships we are able to establish. We must first be in order to become. We must first possess a "self" in order to lose it as the condition of a higher becoming. The relation involved in cognition is not the essence of the self. It must exist first in order to become related, and the relation involved in cognition is but one of many relationships, inasmuch as we are members not only of a mental world, but also of a physical, moral, and spiritual. In other words, we are quite definitely postulating a transcendental ego behind our activities in feeling, volition, and cognition. We are not constituted by our relationships nor are we merely thinking subjects, but we possess a real existence for self in order to become related to other selves.

Having established the position that the being we derived from our Creator is in its measure real, and, though not absolutely independent of Him, yet set over against Him with a limited freedom for the self to develop from its own roots, we can go on to examine the nature of the being thus created. We find ourselves set in a world, the essential notes of which are contingency, change, and finiteness. Yet He hath set Eternity in our hearts. We are "finite-infinite"; creatures of earth and yet withal potential sons of the Most High. Our destiny is revealed to us and the way of its achievement made plain. We can accept the contention that human personality is not something given, but rather something to be achieved, but only in the sense indicated above that we *are* first in order to become. In each individual unit there is the germ, or the potentiality of a higher becoming. If the germ of the true self were not there to begin with, it could never become or develop into personality by any conceivable aid from environment and relationship. With this caution we can make our own the words in which Dr. Moberly contends for the position that human personality is no several or separate thing.

"Its *essentia*," he tells us, "cannot be found in terms of distinctness. It does not, ideally or practically, signify a new, independent centrality of being. On the contrary, it is altogether dependent and relative. It is not at first self-realized in distinctness, that it may afterwards, for additional perfection of enjoyment, be brought into relations. In relation and dependence lie its very *essentia*. Wherever the least real germ of it exists, the true meaning of even that germinal and tentative life, as seen in what it is capable of becoming, is this. It is the capacity of thrilling, in living response, to the movement of the Spirit; it is the aspiration, through conscious affinity (in such hope as is the pledge of its own possibility), after the very beauty of holiness; it is the possibility of self-realization, and effective self-expression, as love; it is the prerogative of consciously reflecting, as a living mirror, the very character of the Being of God. This, and nothing less, is the true reality of personality, that reality which we claim so easily, and so very imperfectly attain. It is only by realizing this that we ever can realize the fullness of what is, in fact, demanded and implied in the very consciousness of being a person. Personality is the possibility of mirroring God; the faculty of being a living reflection of the very attributes and character of the Most High." <sup>1</sup>

This, then, is the Christian view of the meaning and value of finite individuality. The world is the training-school for souls. We are created in order to become like God. We part, however, decisively from all Pantheistic implications when we hasten to add that likeness is not identity. The more truly God-like we become, the more truly human we find ourselves. The utmost conceivable development of the human in communion with God is not its utter loss of such a measure of distinction from Him as to make communion impossible. We are not to become one in essence with Him in any Pantheistic sense, such as would destroy the distinction between the Creator and the creature, between God and His adopted sons. Rejecting any such Pantheistic implications, we claim a *personal* immortality and ground it upon the reality and permanence of our relationship to God

<sup>1</sup> *Atonement and Personality*, pp. 253-4

and of our consequent worth in His sight. He values, so we dare to think, my personal communion with Him, and this because it is a relationship of filial love, the love of the Almighty Father who hath made us for Himself.

It is this central contention for the value of the individual soul which leads us to emphasize our distinctness, and therefore in a real sense our uniqueness as individuals. We may allow all due weight to the truth for which, e.g., Bosanquet contends when he warns us that we must—

“approach the study of finite self-conscious creatures, prepared to find in them the fragments of a vast continuum, fragments in a great measure unaware of this their inherent character, just as the unreflective citizen will believe in his own absolute independence and self-existence, as merely limited by that of others, through a few external contacts. This false claim to absoluteness, with the want of recognition which is its cause, condition the whole character and being of the finite mind.”

We may freely admit also with the same writer that the finite self-conscious creature—

“is able to concentrate in itself and to represent only a limited range of externality, and in this limited range it is always inclined, just because of the limitation, to suppose its being self-complete.”

We can, in short, learn afresh from Bradley, Bosanquet and others the dangers of a crass individualism, and with them appreciate to the full the social aspects of our human life and how, to borrow a fine phrase of Pringle-Pattison's, man is organic to nature and to the universe. Yet when all is said and done we come back, in the interests alike of personal experience and Christian teaching, to contend afresh for what was Leibniz's principle of metaphysics, viz. the identity of indiscernibles.<sup>1</sup> Nor can it be said that the modern study of heredity and the wider recognition of the social and racial aspects of parentage rule out this claim to uniqueness for

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Fourth Letter to Clarke and *Nouveaux Essais*, ii. 27, iii. 6.

the individual self, or forbid us to believe in a limited measure of freedom for the development of the true self. We may be able to distinguish more carefully between our natural and our social heritage, and in this way come to realize that in every direction save one we are terribly limited in our powers of achievement. It remains, nonetheless, true that there is even for the meanest of the sons of men one career open, an achievement in the only sphere in which achievement has the promise of abiding worth, viz. the realm of moral and spiritual values. We are here to *become* and achievement in character is the supreme goal set before us. We are to become like God. There is an inspired chapter in J. A. Thomson's Gifford Lectures,<sup>1</sup> in which he has dealt with "The Other Side of Heredity." To read it is to take heart once again, in spite of all the gloomy pessimism engendered by certain scientific discussions of the undoubted fact that our possibilities are hereditarily predetermined. It is true that they are, but can this be said of our actual personalities?

"Biology and history, as well as our conscience," says Dr. Thomson, "give the lie to the mechanistic fatalism which asserts that we have not, in any measure, freedom of self-development." "The higher the organism, the greater its unpredictability within certain limits" (he tells us); "the greater the power of the higher nature to modify what has undergone automatization or enregistration, the greater the capacity of selecting and altering the environment. We do not know all the evil that is in our inheritance, therefore we should not take too many risky chances. We do not know all the good that is in our inheritance, therefore we should give it every chance."

When we remember that in the working out of His Eternal purpose for our lives, the vast resources of God are freely offered to us, and that by Grace we can be saved through faith, we may well cling to a view of man's destiny which refuses to believe him simply the determined victim of a moulding influence of the past, the sport of an impersonal

<sup>1</sup> vol. ii, p. 495 ff., *The System of Animate Nature*.

fate, but sees in him one who is being moulded by the future, drawn upward towards an Ideal and to whose possibilities of a higher becoming, therefore, we can set no limit, since "it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

It is, moreover, in connexion with this modern study of heredity that we gain from Science itself an added reason for our conviction that we are, each one, unique, and therefore of value.

"The modern study of heredity," Dr. Thomson says, "suggests that our personalities are made up of many strands which go back into antiquity, and which have a unique combination for each individual. The strands are ancient, but the individual 'is a new knot.' And it seems an important fact that a good deal is known in regard to 'the intimate material processes of the interweaving.' There is a fresh unification at the beginning of each individual life,—a fresh unification that implies some measure of unpredictability and freedom from the past."

A Christian philosophy of life, then, would teach us that life is not the explanation of experience, but an education through it. For the benefit of those who have been alienated from the Christian hypothesis by the supposed fatal objections to it derived from the study of heredity, we can point to a biology of education which allows room for the assertion that "character is both defined and realized by the manner in which a given temperament is managed in given circumstances." In this way the writer of the article on "Heredity" in *The Dictionary of Religion and Ethics* sums up his careful survey of the conflicting claims made on behalf of nurture as against nature. The fact is that the two things are intimately interwoven in their action and reaction the one with the other. If we consider only our inheritance from the past, we may conclude that we are hopelessly predetermined; if we consider only the nurture available, we may blame environment for our downfall. Neither view would be justified. The facts of heredity, Dr. Waggett reminds us, are grave enough. The drawbacks of evil inheritance are



real. But the exact state of a man through inheritance is unknown. Hence, as he says—

“you cannot tell what influence is strongest in you ; at any rate, the result is mixed. And since you cannot tell that you have not the most favourable inheritance, it is your duty to act as if you had, and not to run the risk of debasing under the cloak of a bad strain which you do not possess, fine qualities which may actually be yours.” “Fate,” he says, “may defeat the righteous man from without ; it may defeat him from within. But his effort will still have been righteous, and so the judgment upon such a one will be just.

Again, the inherited qualities are certainly too numerous all to find expression in a single lifetime. . . . A man inherits capacities for a dozen different lines in life. One among these is realized by suitable training. . . . Nurture can only develop what is there, and it draws out one or more of a multitude of capacities. . . . In this way a relatively fixed internal constitution, does not preclude a limited freedom of choice. For the possibilities are too numerous for realization. The potentialities cannot all find room on the narrow scene of one life-history. . . . Many of those inheritances which are in our view not moral, but the raw materials of morals, are in their own nature ambiguous, and can be turned to virtue or vice. Life is the story not only of the management of circumstances, but of the management also of these interior equipments. It is the abandonment of anti-impulsive management that constitutes moral failure. Moral failure is the failure to be moral.”<sup>1</sup>

Assume, then, as we do, that this finite universe has a meaning, and has been created as a sphere for soul-making, a probationary school for saints, and further that, therefore, it affords us our opportunity for the achievement in measure of Eternal Values, and that the realization of our true self is bound up with the realization in our lives in ever-increasing degree of these Values to the extent to which we can grow

<sup>1</sup> Article “Heredity,” *E.R.E.*, *passim*.

in grace and in the knowledge of Him whose we are and whom we serve, and become like Him in whose personal life here in the days of His Flesh were supremely manifested those Values which we sum up as Beauty, Truth, and Goodness—revealed in Him not as bare abstractions or things in themselves, but as the attributes or, if you will, the essence of a Holy God of Love, then we have reached in our Christian philosophy of life a true view of the purpose and destiny of the finite-infinite creature.

If it be said that this Christian *Weltanschauung* is simply the translation of the metaphysic of value into religious terms, and is thus an illegitimate misuse of the religious tradition in philosophy, our answer must be, first, that this is the religious view based upon revelation through religious experience and as such we affirm it, but, secondly, that the modern emphasis upon value in current Idealism points our way and we are entitled therefore to claim from it the support it offers in confirmation of our belief.

Our Christian view, then, of the meaning, value, and destiny of our finite individuality compels us to cut adrift from most forms of modern Absolutism and Pluralism. We have to solve the problem of the relation of God to the world in terms of personality, human and Divine. We have to conserve the Absolute Sovereignty of God and show it to be consistent with such a measure of human freedom as to make an ethical and spiritual life possible for the sons of men, and thus to open up before them as the true meaning and goal of human endeavour a career in the sphere of character—that we may become Christlike. We have discussed the problem of the Divine Omnipotence in this connexion, and we have tried to show that the Omnipotence of Holy Love is not incompatible with such a measure of human freedom as we claim to possess and must possess, if we are to develop from our own roots and fulfil the destiny for which God created us. We have shown that, in relation to the universe, God reveals His power as the principle of all motion in the inorganic world, the principle of its vitality in the organic world, and the principle of spiritual life in

the spiritual world. The Omnipotence of Holy Love reveals itself as physical compulsion or as moral suasion, according as it deals with inorganic or organic life or with the souls of men. The form of its expression is governed by the nature of the material. Hence God's dealings with the physical world are not the criterion by which to judge of Him in His relation to human beings. Omnipotent Love cannot do certain things or adopt certain attitudes without contradicting its own character and ceasing to be itself. We do not necessarily equate "power" with "love," even in God, or commit ourselves to the view that there is no power except love in the last resort. Whatever "power" God employs, it is such as is consistent with the character of Him who employs it. If, in the consideration of the problem of God's dealings with us, we allow our minds to dwell upon the qualitative rather than the quantitative aspects of those attributes under which we view Him in relation to the world, viz. omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence, then, as we have seen, we are greatly aided in our efforts to reconcile the belief in His Sovereignty with the belief in our human freedom.

In connexion with this problem of the relation of God to the world and human life we have come upon the word "immanence" as a philosophical term current in much modern philosophical speculation. We have sought to show that it can have no meaning in a Christian philosophy apart from its correlative "transcendence," and that it must be in terms of both Transcendence and Immanence that we must express our Christian thought. Not the least of the services which Dr. Tennant has rendered to Christian theology is the clear way in which he has sought to define the meaning of this much-abused term "immanence," and to show in what sense it may safely be employed in the effort to express our Christian thought. In a valuable paper in the *Constructive Quarterly* for September 1920, on "The Present Conditions of Some Fundamental Christian Doctrines," he has warned us that the word "immanence" embodies a spatial metaphor, and consequently its application to the relation of God to

a person demands even more careful scrutiny than its usage to express the relation of God to the physical world. As it is a term primarily intended to express the *active* relation of God to the world, it means, he tells us, more than mere ubiquity or omnipresence, such as might be predicated of a passive spectator of the world's course, or of a God whose purposive and creative work was confined to decreeing the world's primary collocations. Immanence implies at least continuous maintenance. We have to admit with him the vague character of the expressions in current usage, e.g. that God "inhabits," "pervades," or "informs" the universe. And he goes on to show that if immanence in the physical world is a vague conception, it is still more difficult to reach an understanding of what is meant by divine immanence in a free or self-determined moral agent. Here, he reminds us, we come upon a kind of relation quite distinct from that of God to matter, though the same name has been invoked to include both. But the key is to be found in the conception of moral immanence. Immanence as indwelling in a person, he says, is an ethical relation, grounded in moral affinity, respecting and not overriding human freedom and responsibility; a relation of intimacy but not of obliteration.

We admit that, from the intellectual standpoint, such a moral or spiritual immanence of the Divine in the human is difficult to substantiate, since we cannot find any exact parallel in the relations which hold between person and person, not even in the deeper levels of our finite lives in love and fellowship. The relation of the soul to God and pre-eminently the life hid with Christ in God involves, if we are to trust, as we must, the verdict of religious experience, something of a more intimate and inclusive character. In Him we live and move and have our being in a way in which we are not members one of another. Yet we remember the encouragement held out by Dr. Muirhead to which reference has been made, in the course of the symposium of the Aristotelian society on the question—Can Individual Minds be included in the Mind of God? We must have the

courage of our conviction and support the verdict of our religious experience, however difficult it may be to rationalize it, since, as Dr. Muirhead said, "there are, perhaps, no religious phrases that have been more powerful and universal in their appeal than that which claims for the saint a life that is hid with Christ in God, and that other which describes the ideal Christian experience, 'I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in one.'"

To substantiate this further would carry us far into the field of Christian mysticism. We must content ourselves with a reference to Part II of *A Study in Christology*, where the relation of the Human and the Divine in the Person of Christ and in us is examined at length and a position defended which seeks to do justice to the truth both of Transcendence and Immanence.

The Christian conception of God's Sovereignty brings us to the question so frequently discussed in our own time as to the relation of God to the Absolute. We have answered this question quite definitely by claiming that God is Absolute, but not in the sense in which the term, the Absolute, is used in much philosophical speculation. We agree with Dr. Mackintosh<sup>1</sup> that if the term "Absolute" is to be employed, and if, as apparently is the case, it ought to signify the All of being, it must be definitely used to denote God and the world taken together in their living and essential correlativity. We have seen that in seeking to solve the problem of the One and the Many, Christian Theism lifts the whole question into the realm of personality, human and Divine, and prefers to state the question as one of the relationship between a Personal Absolute Sovereign God and the world He has created. We then say that God's Sovereignty is shown to be consistent with such a measure of relative independence for us creatures as to enable us to be in moral and spiritual relationship with Him in whose service is perfect freedom. We are thus claiming a measure or degree of reality for the finite, and in this sense must agree with, e.g., Rashdall in

<sup>1</sup> *Some Aspects of Christian Belief*, p. 43.



saying that the Absolute must be God and the spirits, not God alone, since together they form a Unity, although that unity, as he has shown, is not the unity of self-consciousness.<sup>1</sup> We are not, however, by this, committed to the view of God as Finite or as "one of the eaches," "one of the selves," a "*primus inter pares*." What we do say is that whilst the act of creation by which God brought into being the world and human life did confer upon it a reality over against Himself, so to speak, with the result that for thought there are two terms, God *and* the created Universe, yet, after all, God did not *add* something to the sum-total of reality which is Himself in creating or bringing into being *ex nihilo* what but for His act would not have existed. Moreover He, as Perfection of Being, is not so related to His creation as to make Him in any sense dependent upon it for His Perfection, though its perfection is dependent upon Him at every turn and its true end cannot be achieved apart from Him as its ground and its sustaining power. There cannot be more Reality than God who is the Ultimate Reality, but this does not mean that God cannot create a number of semi-independent reals, whose existence is due to His Creative activity. I am not sure that the position which we are striving to maintain does not lead us in the end to accept the Scholastic distinction between "being" in God and "being" in creatures, and to say that the term cannot be applied to both in the same significance. Thus, for example, Joyce, in treating of the Divine Essence in his work on Natural Theology, maintains that God as subsistent actuality is infinite. He is the Abyss of all reality, and can receive no addition. Created beings are, it is true, real. But however wonderful their created perfection, they can add nothing to the perfection or reality which there is in God. They contain nothing which is not found in an infinitely higher manner in Him. In Infinite Being and finite being we have not got two things which can be added up, so that, taken together, they make more reality than is found in the Infinite alone. The perfections of finite being can no more add to God's perfections

<sup>1</sup> *Theory of Good and Evil*, ii. p. 340.

than a thousand, or a million, superficies could add to the bulk of a solid body. To use a Scholastic phrase, the creation of the finite resulted in a greater number of real things (*plura entia*), but not of more reality (*plus entitatis*). Were God to create a thousand universes there would be no addition to perfection, any more than to goodness or to truth. Finite perfection, finite goodness, finite truth, are but the reflection on an infinitely lower plane of what is already God's.<sup>1</sup>

If, then, we accept, as I think we must, this distinction between "substantial" and "accidental" being, we can carry it with us as a key in our efforts to solve the relation between the Creator and His creatures without involving ourselves in any Pantheistic conclusion such as seems inevitable if we regard God and man as "beings" in the same sense. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity conserves the Transcendence of God and His absolute Self-sufficedness, whilst, as we have seen, the complementary truth of His Immanence in the world and in human life finds its supreme manifestation in the Incarnation. This last, which is the crowning glory of the whole cycle of Christian thought, must not be confused with the modern doctrine of Immanentism so as to obscure in any way the meaning of the "Word made flesh." Whilst this was the climax of all previous activities of the Divine Logos in creation and revelation to bridge the gulf between God and His World and to manifest Himself to the sons of men through the personalities of men, in nature and in human life, yet His Incarnation is to be differentiated from all that had gone before it by way of preparation in this way, that it was a different mode of revelation. Before, He had revealed Himself through the lives of others; now, He reveals Himself *in His own life*. It was not the case of His finding, in the life of another, an ideal medium for the manifestation of Himself, but, on the contrary, it was the advent of Himself, into our world of time and space, and His leading of a personal life within the limitations of our finitude.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 290-1.

We have, further, seen that the acceptance of this distinctive doctrine of the Incarnation involves the Christian thinker in a wholly new and profounder conception of God than that suggested by Jewish ethical monotheism, of which the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is the culmination. In these Christian dogmas of the Trinity, the Incarnation and Creation *ex nihilo*, are to be found the Christian contribution to the vexed problem of the One and the Many. We claim that in these doctrines are to be found the truths for which modern philosophers are seeking in the effort of the human mind to find rest in an ultimate unity.

The problems of a philosophy of religion are ever new and yet old. Each succeeding age has to answer the same questions which perplexed previous generations. The same problems reappear with varying emphasis, but with a certain uniformity of sequence. The terms employed may vary from age to age, but the substance of the thought remains the same. If the task of a philosophy of religion is to relate the truths of natural and revealed religion to the wider fields of human thought, each age will need its own philosophy of religion adapted to the growth in thought and progress in discovery reached by succeeding generations. We must not be surprised to find, however, that our effort to relate our Christian belief to the new learning of our time breaks down precisely at those points where previous generations of thinkers, attempting the same task, were forced to call a halt and to choose between adhering to the full meaning of the Christian dogmas at the expense of a failure to reconcile them with current philosophical speculation or so modifying their Christian beliefs as to win acceptance for them in the intellectual world at the cost of explaining away that in the dogmas which ultimately eludes all efforts at rationalization.

Reviewing, then, the whole field covered by our previous discussions, we find ourselves back at a position which is to all intents and purposes that which was reached by some of the great scholastic thinkers. We have found that our dogmas of the Trinity, the Incarnation, Creation *ex nihilo*,

and other distinctively Christian contributions to the thinking world ultimately cannot be fully rationalized. There is left on our hands an element of mystery and our human thought is arrested at a point where we have to call in the aid of faith to help us.

This really brings us back to the old problem of the relation between authority and reason. We remember the way in which this problem, handed on through Augustine to the scholastic age, was handled by men like Erigena, Anselm, Abelard, and the great Aquinas. If we ask ourselves to which of these great thinkers we should wish to attach ourselves, it is undoubtedly in the last-named that we find an attitude adopted which commends itself most as a help in our present perplexity. We have admitted that our attempted outline sketch of a Christian philosophy breaks down at the points where we seek to rationalize the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation. Now, whilst Anselm did not despair of the power of thought to exhibit the reasonableness of these dogmas, which, though given by revelation, could nonetheless be understood, according to his own dictum *Credo ut intelligam*; Aquinas, on the contrary, distinctly claimed a sphere *supra rationem*, and maintained that there was a limit to finite thought beyond which unaided it could not penetrate.<sup>1</sup> Thus Christian dogma cannot be fully rationalized. The Incarnation and the Trinity remain "mysterious." If it be said that the subsequent Hegelian movement vindicated once and for all the essential rationality of the universe, and thus by its treatment of the dogmas of the Trinity and the Incarnation refuted Aquinas and vindicated Anselm, the answer to-day is to examine the kind of transformation which these same Christian dogmas have to undergo in the hands of the Hegelians in their effort to exhibit them as truths of reason. The fact, of course, is that these doctrines in the hands of Hegel were evacuated of their true meaning for the Christian, and it is not too much to say that what we have in Hegelianism is a caricature of the Christian faith. Even if this be felt to be an over-

<sup>1</sup> Wicksteed, *Dogma and Philosophy*, pp. 50-1.



statement, we are at least safe in asserting that Hegelianism has not won in our day such universal acceptance as to enable the Christian philosopher to take a holiday because his task is accomplished for him by the magic of the Hegelian dialectic. On the contrary, we are back behind Hegel and Kant to the unsolved problems, and, as I have said, some of us are casting wistful glances towards Scholasticism and wondering whether St. Thomas is not our true guide in the perplexities with which, as we have seen, our Christian thought is beset in the effort to come to terms with the "modern mind."

There are some who, with Anselm, will continue vigorously to protest against any such limit to the powers of reason such as we have suggested must be admitted to exist. They will denounce the later Scholasticism in the hands of Aquinas as a betrayal of reason and the key to its decline. They will say that to call a halt to thought is to abandon metaphysics and to hand over the religious interests to irrationalism and bankruptcy. They will warn us of the revenge which reason always brings upon those who attempt to escape her allegiance. Nonetheless, we must adhere to the claim of St. Thomas in the interests not of philosophy but of religion. And we do so because we refuse to admit that the intellect alone is competent to "sense" Reality. In fact, to some extent, our claim to what we call a sphere "*supra rationem*" is not an appeal so much to the irrational—with all its dangers to which we, no less than our critics, are fully alive—as to the "larger reason" which faith has not inaptly been called. When we find a limit to the powers of the finite intellect in the effort to apprehend Reality at a sensitive point, we have other resources—æsthetic, moral, spiritual—as well as intellectual powers, and when the human reason falters before the *mysterium tremendum*, the "inner logic" of faith may carry us further. This appeal to faith, far from being the abandonment of metaphysics, is rather an appeal to a "larger reason" than the merely logical. Where Aristotelian rationalism falters, we claim a power of the whole human personality in its tensest moments



to apprehend in some direct intuitive way what escapes us by a process of reasoning. If it be said that this is an appeal against logic to mysticism; a claim to the possession of some religious sense or faculty of which psychology knows nothing, I do not see why we should fear to accept the challenge. After all, we have the whole weight of religious experience on our side in the claim we are making for the "larger reason," by which we seek to transcend the verdict given by mere ratiocination. The present reaction against "the vice of intellectualism," as evidenced by the immense influence Bergson is exercising, has been for some of us a trumpet-call to a larger freedom. Not that we wish to plunge recklessly into the quicksands of irrationalism, but rather that we feel freer to claim that intellect alone has not the last word or the only word in our search after that supra-mundane world the presence of which above us, around us, within us, is at once the bewilderment of our minds and the inner music of our souls.

I find myself clinging with more confidence than ever to what Inge has called the "logic of the whole personality" in the effort to penetrate more deeply into that world "*supra rationem*," which is at once transcendent above and immanent in the lives of us finite-infinite spirits. In our treatment of Immortality we have had recourse to it. We have suggested that in a living experience of eternal life here and now, rather than in the subsequent reflection upon it by a purely intellectual exercise, we can "sense" the reality and *know* that death has not the last word. Again, in our treatment of the problem of the Person of Christ we have appealed to the same "inner logic" or "larger reason," the activity of faith which enables us to rise above the bewilderment of our intellects when confronted with His Person and its meaning in our human lives, and to say with St. Thomas, "My Lord and my God." And generally in all our efforts to substantiate the Supernatural, it is faith's activity which "senses" the absolute character of values and enables us to claim for them the nature of the Eternal and the Abiding. Were we merely finite, such a faculty

would be denied us, but being as we believe "finite-infinite," there arise within us :

those obstinate questionings

Of sense and outward things,  
 Fallings from us, vanishings ;  
 Blank misgivings of a Creature  
 Moving about in worlds not realized,  
 High instincts before which our mortal Nature  
 Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised :  
 . . . those first affections,  
 Those shadowy recollections,  
 Which, be they what they may,  
 Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,  
 Are yet a master-light of all our seeing ;  
 Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make  
 Our noisy years seem moments in the being  
 Of the eternal Silence : truths that wake,  
 To perish **never** :  
 Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,  
 Nor Man nor Boy,  
 Nor all that is at enmity with Joy,  
 Can utterly abolish or destroy !  
 Hence in a season of calm weather,  
 Though inland far we be,  
 Our souls have sight of that immortal sea  
 Which brought us hither,  
 Can in a moment travel thither,  
 And see the children sport upon the shore,  
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.<sup>1</sup>

We will conclude, then, by applying to the larger context of the whole of the questions we have considered in the foregoing chapters, the words with which we summed up our examination of Dr. Matthews's treatment of the *Idea of Revelation*.

We will ask one final question : Shall we *ever* effect a reconciliation between religion and the philosophy of religion—between reason and revelation ?

A philosophy of religion has its limitations. It is essentially an attempt at rationalization. We may for the purposes of

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, *Ode, Intimations of Immortality*.

a philosophy of religion succeed in rationalizing the Incarnation, but when all is said and done and when philosophers have become reconciled to us by means of our rationalization, there is something more in the Incarnation than is contained in our rationalization. What precisely that more is we cannot further define, but we witness to its presence when we contend for a supra-rational element in Christianity and maintain that a *fully* rationalized Christianity would be a contradiction in terms. We may put the point in another way by saying that the finite intellect as such cannot grasp all that is contained in experience, and especially in religious experience. Religion is something more than the categories of the mind can embrace. We need the whole human personality at its tensest moments to essay the task of apprehending the Given, but when we think by this means that we have got it, lo! it eludes our grasp and leaves us still with a sense of the Beyond, an Ideal too big for our finite human life to reach.

We shall thus have to draw a distinction between religion and a philosophy of religion. The one is an experience; the other an interpretation. The latter never fully covers the former. A description is never an explanation. The Person of Christ in this sense remains the bankruptcy of human reasoning, and any explanation of the Incarnation in a philosophical system will be successful only at the cost of omitting that in the fact of Christ which escapes analysis by the finite intellect and leaves us with a sense of the Supernatural, a wholesome reminder of that element in religion which we call the Transcendent, i.e. something *not* ourselves; something we do not make, and to which our religious experience, psychologically viewed, is only the *response*.

Thus, in any endeavour to determine the relations of reason and revelation two things must be remembered: (a) the transcendental element in all revelation, and (b) the limitations of human reason. These two considerations, in our opinion, make an adequate philosophy of religion impossible of attainment. The best we can hope for is a growing

approximation to agreement between the two, but never a complete reconciliation.

Nevertheless, the need for such a reconciliation sets the task for succeeding ages. In the eighteenth century a somewhat narrow and aggressive rationalism sought to extinguish revelation altogether and relegated it to the realm of superstition and priestcraft, leaving the religion of pure reason and the line of distinction between natural and revealed religion. In the nineteenth century the growth of the purely psychological interest has tended to lay the stress upon the element of discovery in revelational experience and to identify this with the revelation itself. Thus the Given and man's response to it have been confused. Man's intuition of the Divine has been mistaken for the Divine itself. Man has discovered the Divine and found it to be himself! He was told that he was made in the Divine image and a humanitarian age assures him that the image of himself is the Thing in itself. There is no need to seek *It* further afield. Hence in our own day we have immanentism pure and simple and no room in our modern philosophy for transcendence. Why should the Catholic interpretation differ from what will commend itself to the philosophical mind?

The answer we suggest is, because of just that element in the Catholic interpretation which escapes intellectual analysis, viz. the supernatural which is supra-rational. Here Aquinas holds good, and here faith must take its leap where intellect halts. There is that in Christianity to which the Church bears witness and which at the same time refuses to conform to any rationalizing process. It is the despair of the philosophers who seek to understand it and a stumbling-block to those of us who seek to explain it. We wish to win an intellectual acceptance for our Christian verities. The task is beyond us. The best we can hope to do is to adhere loyally to the Given and the Church's interpretation of that. Then as opportunity offers we can in the light of that show philosophers where in our opinion they err and where we think the true key lies. We may not be thanked for our pains, still less for our loyalty, but the Church has fulfilled this task

through all the ages as the Guardian of the Deposit of Faith, and we must take our part in the work. The Church has witnessed the rise and decline of many philosophical systems. It has seen its truths distorted and its doctrines disfigured in not a few. It has, however, lived to see these same truths vindicated afresh at the expense of the very systems which sought to disparage them. And still to-day, like the wise householder, it waits to bring forth from its treasures things new and old.





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